GAME OF THRONES NEW SEASON EXCLUSIVE!



SFX

273

THE WORLD'S No.1 SCI-FI MAGAZINE



SUPERGIRL

How Superman's cousin conquered TV

CAPTAIN AMERICA CIVIL WAR

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS!

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AGENTS OF SHIELD



One-on-one with Agent Simmons

ORPHAN BLACK



Send in the clones... again

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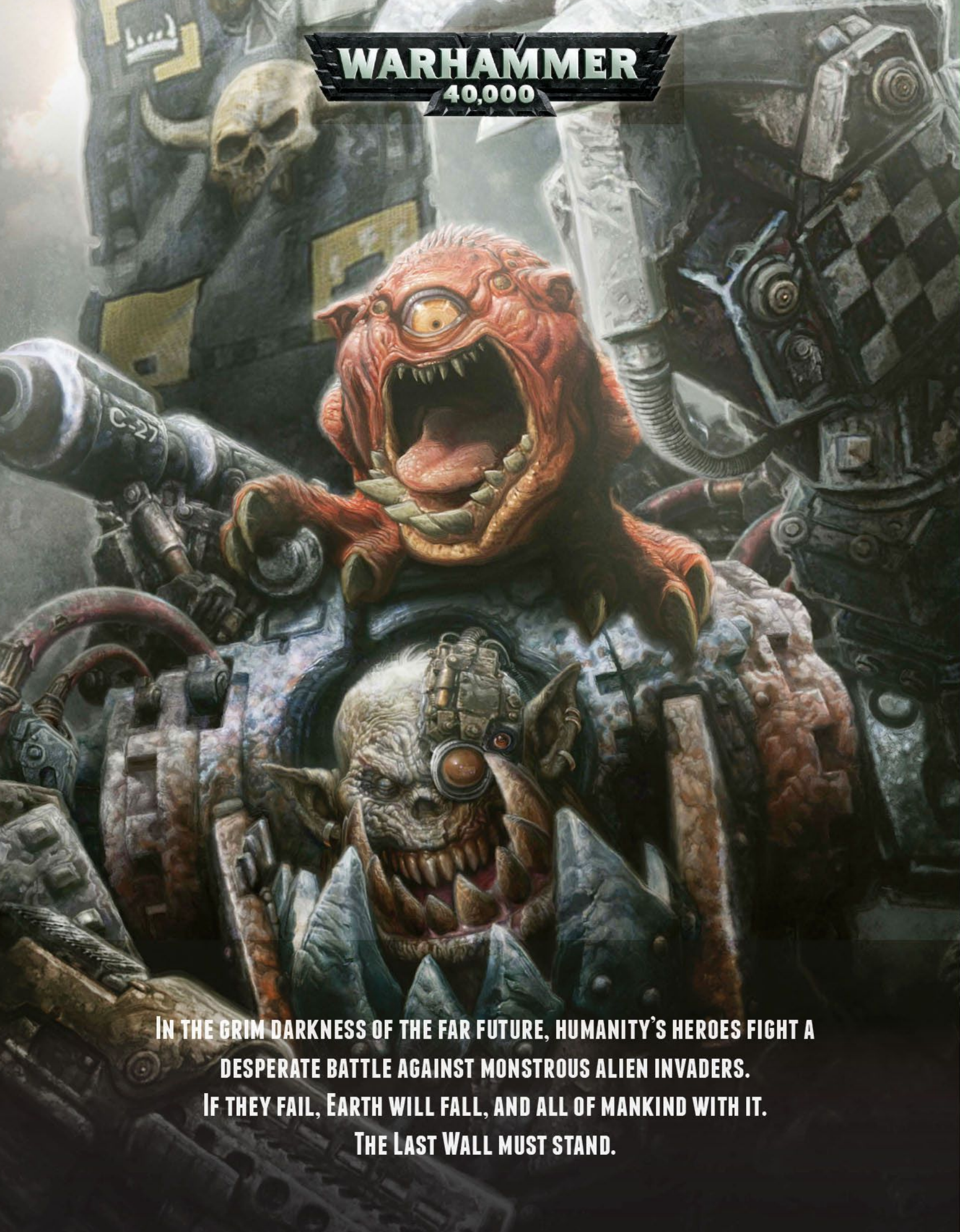


The zombies have taken LA!

Future

HUGE TV EXCLUSIVES!

PLUS! BRIAN BLESSED ON FLASH GORDON || SHAKESPEARE GOES SCI-FI || BEN AFFLECK || GHOSTBUSTERS || WARCRAFT || OUTLANDER || UFO || JOE ABERCROMBIE || TOM WATSON MP



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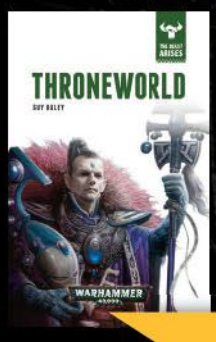


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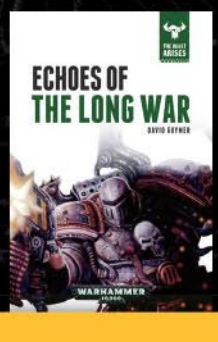


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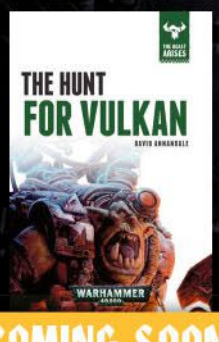
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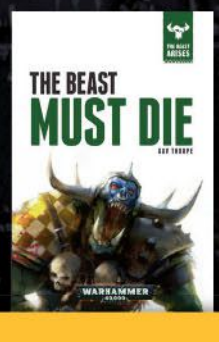
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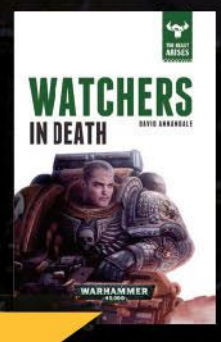
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BOOK 8



BOOK 9



COMING SOON

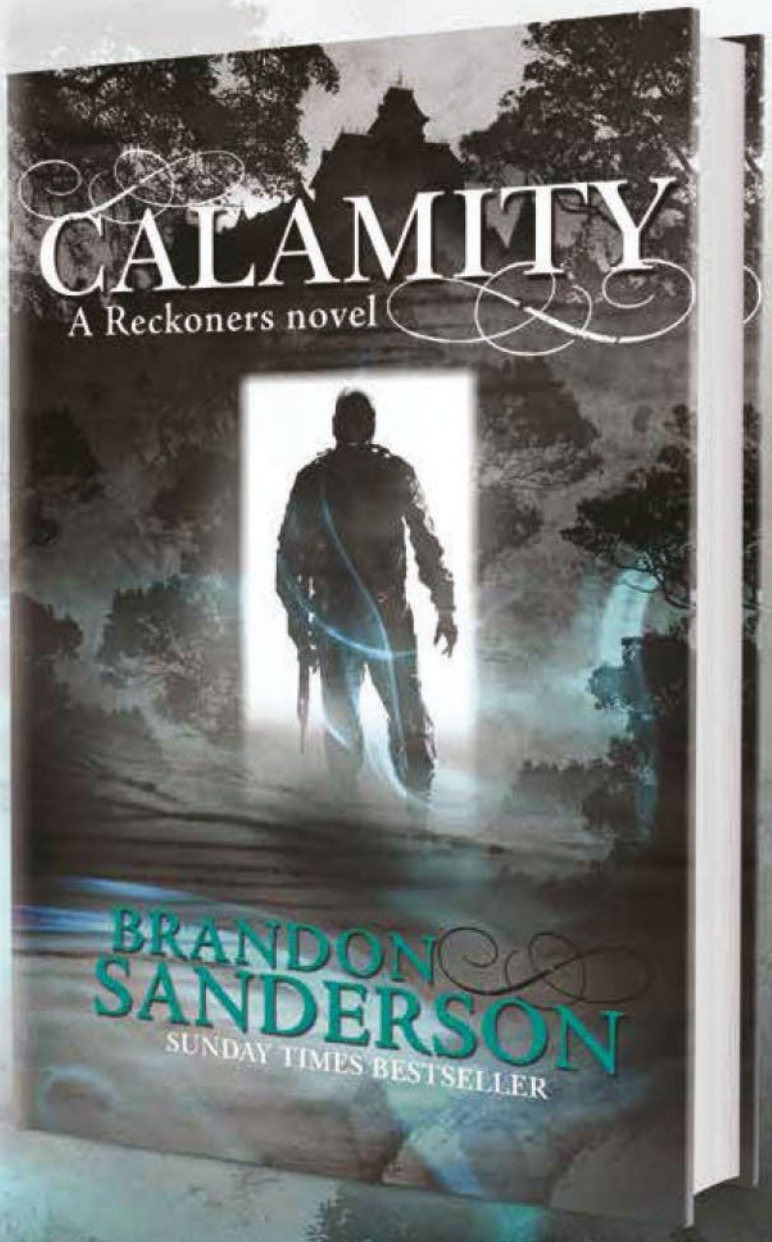
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June 2016
Issue 273

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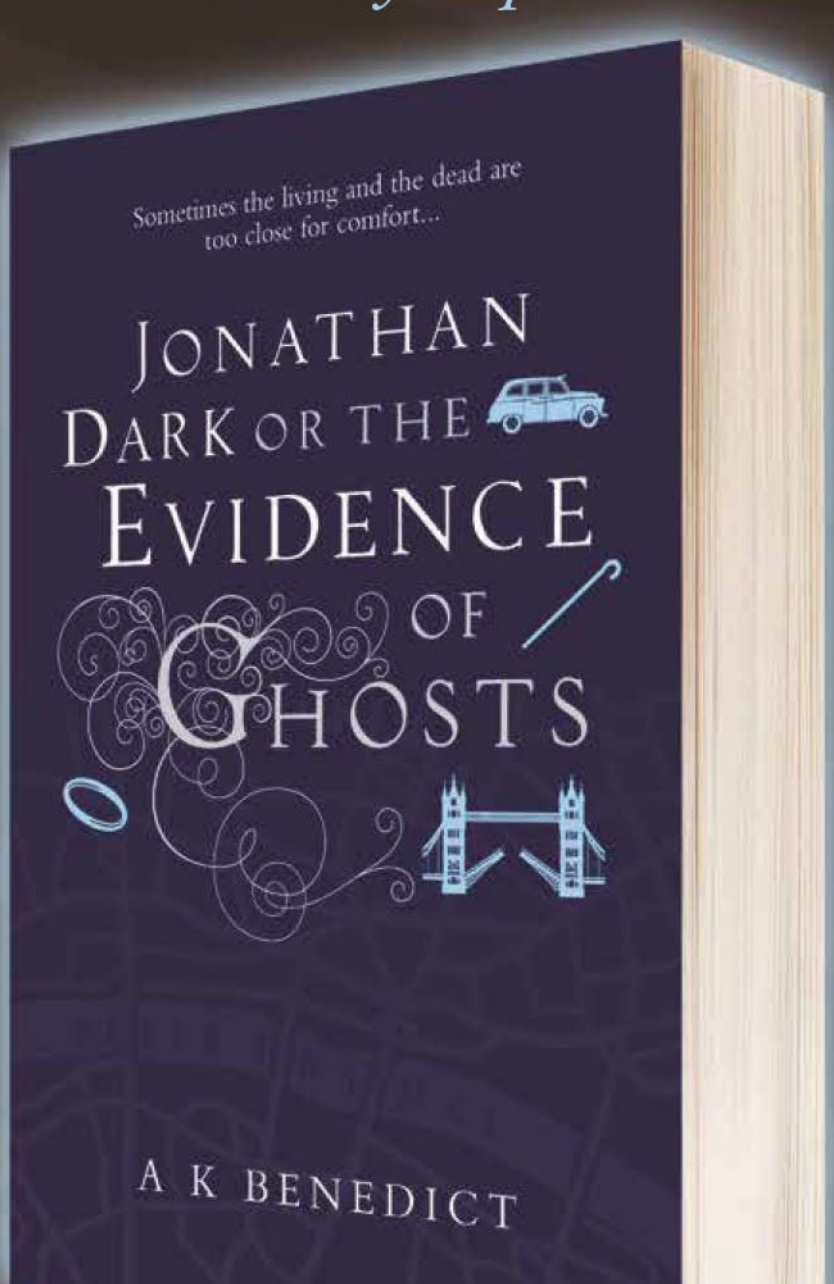
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‘**A K Benedict** is snapping at the heels of **Ben Aaronovitch** as one of the new stars of the sub-genre of crime with a supernatural twist . . .’

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Rants & Raves

INSIDE THE *SFX* HIVE MIND

RICHARD EDWARDS
EDITOR

RAVES
→ I have mixed feelings about *The X-Files*' return, but "Mulder And Scully Meet The Were-Monster" was absolutely joyous – my favourite bit of telly so far this year.
→ Brash, smug, annoying... I thought *Deadpool* was ace.
→ Read Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* – loved it. Can't wait to see what Spielberg does with it.

NICK SETCHFIELD
FEATURES EDITOR

RAVES
→ Hope you enjoy this month's Brian Blessed feature. You might like to bear in mind that it was all one giant answer. You might also like to bear in mind I hadn't actually asked a question.
RIP
→ Sorry to hear of the passing of Tony Dyson, who helped build the original R2-D2.

IAN BERRIMAN
REVIEWS EDITOR

RAVES
→ Really excited that *The Wrath Of Khan*'s Nicholas Meyer will be writing for the new *Trek* TV series.
→ New movie soundtracks label Stylotone sounds very promising. www.stylotone.com
→ Crafty people, these felt doll patterns are ace, especially Diana from *V*: http://bit.ly/vfeltdoll.

WILL SALMON
NEWS EDITOR

RAVES
→ China Miéville's *This Census-Taker* is an oblique gem of a book.
RANTS
→ The last two episodes of *The X-Files* were staggeringly poor, with "Babylon" quite possibly the show's worst ever. A real shame, as eps two, three and four were all strong. Fewer episodes by Chris Carter next time, please!

RUSSELL LEWIN
PRODUCTION EDITOR

RAVES
→ *Deadpool* was amusing. Has to hold a record for quips-a-minute. Best Marvel-themed movie in several years, maybe?
RANTS
→ Finally saw Trank's *Fantastic Four*. Not as terrible as many said but weirdly confined and essentially a film missing a middle – a "fm", if you will...

JONATHAN COATES
ART EDITOR

RAVES
→ DK's brilliantly detailed *The Force Awakens Visual Dictionary* has been keeping me well-informed with fabulous Force facts this month. One annotation even helpfully points out that Han Solo's formerly brown hair is now entirely grey. Harsh!
RANT
→ That *Ghostbusters* trailer.

CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK
DEPUTY ART EDITOR

RAVES
→ Intrigued about Seth Rogen making a live-action *Where's Wally* film. Spent many an hour searching for all the characters in the books as a child.
RANTS
→ Disturbed myself by watching *Goodnight Mommy* – creepy isn't the word.

ADRIAN HILL
AD MANAGER

RAVES
→ Last month I got the chance to hang out with the cast of my favourite TV show, *The Walking Dead*. Norman Reedus made my day by admitting he likes to read *SFX* in the loo! And the current series has got to be the best yet! I must give a big shout out to Michael Guthas for the invite, and everyone at Walker Stalker con.

MIRIAM McDONALD
WRITER

RAVES
→ I can't believe there have been any doubts about renewing *Agent Carter* for a third season – along with *Gotham*, it's one of the best comic-based TV shows around.
RANTS
→ Ridley Scott remaking *The Prisoner*? Even if it's not as superb as the original, it can't be as bad as the last remake. Be seeing it...

DAVE BRADLEY
SFX LEGEND

FAREWELL
→ After many years at Future I'm heading for new horizons this month. Travelling on the Starship *SFX* has been a thrill ride and I'll take away with me incredible memories of this sci-fi journey we've shared. I'll miss you all. I'm still a huge fan though so expect to see me popping up at the odd sci-fi convention!

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You wait years for two superstar superheroes to have a ding-dong on screen, and then two superpowered scraps come along at once. And so, hot on the heels of Batman and Superman duking it out in *Dawn Of Justice*, Captain America and Iron Man are having a difference of opinion in *Civil War* – and bringing most of the Marvel Cinematic Universe along for the ride.

Okay, there may be no extraterrestrial bad guys or self-replicating android threatening global apocalypse this time, but make no mistake, Cap's latest outing is every bit as massive as the Avengers movies – and could well be the biggest box office smash of the year. We've got interviews with stars Chris Evans and Robert Downey Jr, and directors the Russo brothers, about the biggest Versus movie in about a month (p52).

Elsewhere, we're celebrating the small screen, with exclusives on the returns of some of the hottest TV shows on the planet, including *Game Of Thrones* (p62), *Fear The Walking Dead* (p78) and *Orphan Black* (p88). We can also boast one of the LOUDEST INTERVIEWS YOU'LL EVER READ, as Brian Blessed bombards us with his memories of *Flash Gordon* (p82). The man is a true force of nature.

Of course, there's loads more excellent sci-fi and fantasy heading your way this year. Find out how to subscribe on p50 (or p105 if you live outside the UK), and make sure you never miss an issue.

Rich

Richard Edwards, Editor
@RichDEdwards

RICH'S PICTURE BY OLLY CURTIS



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JUNE 2016

NEWS //// INTERVIEWS //// INSIGHT //// POLITICS! *edited by Will Salmon*



SHOWRUNNER EXCLUSIVE!

HIGH SOCIETY

Outlander's Ron Moore tells us about the Highland drama's move to the courts of Paris...

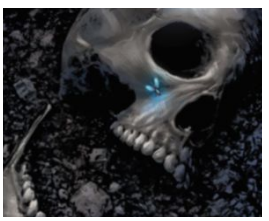
If you could go back in time and change events to prevent the death of thousands, would you do it? That idea drives the second season of *Outlander*, which finds heroes Claire (Caitriona Balfe) and Jamie Fraser (Sam Heughan) in Paris using their good standing in the Court of King Louis XV to try and thwart the looming Jacobite rising.

While time travel was a subtle element in the first season, the concept is the backbone of the second, as Claire wrestles with desperately wanting to save Jamie and his Scottish kin from death on the Culloden moors in 1745, while →

Highlights



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→ Duncan Jones on big-screen fantasy epic *Warcraft*.



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→ Syfy's new show, *Hunters*, discovers a dastardly alien conspiracy afoot.

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SCI-FACT! **Caitriona Balfe won Best TV Actress at the 2014 Saturn Awards and is nominated again this year.**

> "These books travel and you leave things behind. It's very complicated"

also trying to preserve the existence of her husband, Frank (Tobias Menzies), in her original time of 1945.

It's heady stuff that novelist Diana Gabaldon has been exploring for more than 20 years in eight (and counting) *Outlander* books, but now it's up to series showrunner Ronald D Moore to make it work on TV. Luckily, Moore has a history of weaving the mechanics of sci-fi into riveting personal drama from his long career guiding shows like *Star Trek* and *Battlestar Galactica*. For Moore, *Outlander* has proven to be more of a logistical beast than a cerebral one. The show shoots on location in Scotland, but season two has necessitated trips to Prague (doubling as Paris) and southern England (as Versailles) in order to service the story.

"The production itself is very difficult," Moore tells Red Alert. "TV is typically produced with a home base, an apartment building or the bridge of the Enterprise as a standing set, which makes things faster, easier, cheaper and there's a comfort level. These books travel and you leave things behind. As a result you are designing and prepping and shooting movies over and over again. It's a very complicated production. The second season is even worse because now you are in Paris and every set, costume and prop [from season one] had to be set aside. It's Parisian salons and their parties and the Court. All the rhythms and feelings of season one are in the rearview mirror. Now it's a whole new series."

Actress Caitriona Balfe, who plays the fiercely independent and resourceful time-hopping Claire, admits that the change affected everyone. "It's a different world. [The dresses] change how you carry yourself and it changes how you interact with people. All of a sudden instead of hanging out with hairy Highlanders, you are at the Court. It's a different set of social rules and it's been a very interesting change."

For Sam Heughan, who plays rugged Scot Jamie Fraser, the shift in tone has been perhaps most pronounced for his character. The actor's had to reinvent Jamie from a wanted man on the run to a polished Machiavellian political insider who is firmly trying to shift the almost zealot-like goals of Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Andrew Gower). "I was terrified of being lost in ruffles," Heughan laughs about his initial reaction to the season. "I told Terry [*Outlander* costume designer Terry Dresbach] from day one that's not happening. She's terrific and of course she didn't do that. We see him taking on this new persona but he's not lost his roots. The kilt is very much used as he's a proud Scot." Asked how he would define the course of the season, Heughan assesses, "If season one was about young love and innocence, season two is about adulthood and parenthood."



Season two is based on the book *Dragonfly In Amber*.

In the first half of season two especially, as Jamie works within the Court to turn tides, Claire has the burden of tending to her pregnancy and finding a proactive role in this new world that is the most foreign place she's ever tried to exist. "It's interesting," Balfe explains. "In a lot of ways Claire has less freedom in Paris than she did in Scotland. The role of women in that society is almost more restricted. They like to sit around and have tea and Claire wants to pull her hair out because that's not where she feels most comfortable. She feels a little lost for a lot of time in France."

As it turns out, Claire finds her path through new characters, particularly the enigmatic apothecary Master Raymond and Mother Hildegarde, who runs the L'Hôpital des Anges. "Master Raymond is her healer counterpart who she meets and he's played incredibly by Dominique Pinon," Balfe enthuses. "He's just such a unique human being and a fantastic actor. They connect on a professional level like when she first met Geillis Duncan (Lotte Verbeek). And then Mother Hildegard is played by Frances de la Tour who I was so excited to work with. These are friends for Claire who, for the first time, are equals and she has similar interests with."

Outlander season two starts on 9 April in the US on Starz, and comes to Amazon Instant Video in the UK a day later.





Don't worry – this isn't *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies*.



Claire (Caitriona Balfe) and Jamie (Sam Heughan) have moved on from the hills.



This season basks in the opulence and intrigue of 18th century Parisian society.

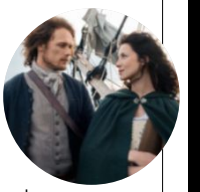
FIGHTING THE FUTURE

More on how the *Outlander* team bring the time travel show to vivid life

BY THE BOOK

→ It's no secret that the passionate book readers feel very possessive of the *Outlander* world and are very invested in wanting to know if the TV series will continue to follow the book narratives closely. To that Moore says regarding season two, "We do the best we can and we're always trying to preserve the spirit of what it is to serve the fan audience but also the audience who has no idea what the books are about." He insists that any deviations will be in line with season one's – expanded characters or added perspectives used to broaden the world.

TO BE CONTINUED



→ When we last saw Jamie and Claire in season one, they were on a boat headed to France to enact their history changing plans. Where will season two pick up? Balfe teases, "We all felt quite strongly that when we meet these characters again it's a continuation of last year. You don't go through a traumatic event like that and just bounce back very easily. They have figure out how to navigate this new world and they assume very new roles as well. You always fear when you go back it might be like rehashing the same old stuff but it's felt very new."

CASTING KIN

→ For fans of the book series, one of the most anticipated announcements regarding season two has been the casting of Claire and Jamie's daughter, Brianna, and the grown-up version of Reverend Wakefield's son, Roger. However it took almost the entirety of the second season shoot to announce actors Sophie Skelton and Richard Rankin. Moore explains, "We had been looking at tape for a long time for Roger and Brianna because they are such key characters moving forward. We took our time with it like we did with Jamie and Claire."



FIGHTING FROCKS

→ There's plenty of drama for Claire to overcome in *Outlander* season two, but Balfe admits that the most unexpected obstacle has been the Parisian finery here character is now wearing. "The costumes are so beautiful," the actress says of Claire's array of Court-worthy frocks. "Terry Dresbach has outdone herself. But they are very restrictive, which after jumping up and down on horses and running around in the Highlands, that was an adjustment. They change everything."

SCI-FACT! MMORPG *World Of Warcraft* has 5.5 million subscribers currently.



DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE

TWO TRIBES

Duncan Jones tells us about entering the fantasy world of *Warcraft*...

Director Duncan Jones has garnered serious cult kudos over the last seven years thanks to his science fiction classic *Moon*, and the twisty time-travel thriller *Source Code*. But now he's taking a swerve into fantasy territory with *Warcraft* – the $100 million adaptation of the wildly popular online videogame.

"There's no reason for videogame films to be as disappointing as they have been," says Jones, well aware of the litany of terrible movies that have spun out of successful games franchises. "Comic book films have experienced a renaissance, commercially and critically, over the past decade, and there's no reason why this can't happen with videogames."

Jones has a long history with *Warcraft*, having discovered it when the series first debuted in 1994. "I was constantly travelling around the world when I was younger and spent most of my time with books and games. One of my favourites was *The Lost Vikings* from Blizzard Entertainment who then developed *Warcraft*, which I've been playing ever since."

Being a fan of the franchise brought its own set of challenges, however. "The first was to take this incredible mass of lore that has developed over time and distill it into a screenplay, a single story, which would appeal to both the hardcore fans and to people who have never heard of *Warcraft*," says Jones.

Writing the bulk of the film's shooting script himself, Jones was determined to make this more than just another action movie with two-dimensional villains. "The film is rooted in both sides of the conflict," says Jones. "Broadly, the human Alliance is represented by Lothar, the commander of the Azeroth military; and Durotan [is] the main protagonist of the Orc Horde. But there are so many other characters in-between, and it is the family relationships that exist in the film, with the humans and the Orcs, particularly between fathers and sons, that have the most meaning to me now, having recently lost my father and knowing that I'm about to become a father myself."



Either Ryanair's latest or a man on a big bird.

Warcraft represents the next step in Jones's progression as a filmmaker: his first potential big-budget blockbuster. But Jones says his approach hasn't changed. "I knew the Orcs had to look believable," says Jones, who enlisted ILM and Weta for this assignment. "Every genre filmmaker today has to rely on some hybrid of digital and practical effects, so we have CG-created Orcs but also amazing physical sets. This is the same hybrid approach I took with *Moon*, which relied heavily on practical effects, models and miniatures, but not solely, like the scene where GERTY walks through a corridor, which was done digitally."





> "There's no reason for videogame films to be as disappointing as they have been"



Shoulder pads: always a necessary fashion accessory.

And what about that sequel? *Warcraft* is intended as the first in a series, but Jones isn't ready to return just yet. "I spent three years on this film. I'm going to wait and see what the reaction is like before I even think about a sequel." He won't be idle, however. Up next is the long-in-gestation *Mute*, which Jones describes as "an independent sci-fi thriller I've been thinking about for a long time. I need to get away from *Warcraft* for a while!"

Warcraft opens on 3 June.

AERIAL ASSAULT

SCI-FI TV ROUND UP

→ CBS's new **Star Trek** show has recruited Rod Roddenberry – son of *Trek* creator Gene – as executive producer, while *Wrath Of Khan* director Nicholas Meyer has joined the show's writing staff.

→ *Game Of Thrones*'s Ser Loras, Finn Jones, cast as Marvel's **Iron Fist**.

→ **Peter Capaldi** states that he has been asked to stay on for Chris Chibnall's first season of *Doctor Who*, but has yet to make a decision.

→ **Agents Of SHIELD** renewed for a fourth season.



→ Disney announces a **Big Hero 6** series is in development for Disney XD.

→ Mulder and Scully's origins to be revealed in a pair of Young Adult books by Kami Garcia and Jonathan Maberry.

→ Geena Davis joins the cast of **The Exorcist** TV show.

→ A **Xena: Warrior Princess** reboot is in development.

→ Ian McShane has been cast as Mr Wednesday in Starz's adaptation of **American Gods**.

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DON'T QUOTE ME

"I THINK IT WAS THE SINGLE BIGGEST MISSED OPPORTUNITY OF MY LIFE. IT WAS A LOVELY BUNCH OF PEOPLE TO WORK WITH TOO."

John Rhys-Davies liked the idea of '90s parallel universe-hopping show *Sliders*, but not the execution.



MY SCI-FI

Because famous people are fans too



TOM WATSON

THE DEPUTY LEADER OF ***THE LABOUR PARTY*** ON HIS SF FAVES

Favourite SF/fantasy film

→ *The Fifth Element*. It's the ultimate sci-fi love story. Ever since I was a kid watching *The Jetsons* I've always wondered when the highways in the sky will actually happen. Luc Besson paints a wonderful picture of them in all their chaotic glory. As it turns out, drone lanes will become a reality far sooner. I imagine it will be drones, rather than ebooks, that will be Amazon founder Jeff Bezos's lasting legacy.



Favourite SF/fantasy TV show

→ My first ever introduction to TV sci-fi was *The Tomorrow People*, which I obsessed over as a six-year-old. But I guess my favourite ever sci-fi TV show was *Blake's 7* – in which a dysfunctional group of imperfect heroes struggle against an evil government intent on interplanetary domination. I'm not sure why that still resonates, but it does.



Favourite SF/fantasy book

→ Anything by Heinlein. I'd choose *Farmer In The Sky*, about a teenager on the frontiers of space. But it easily could have been *Stranger In A Strange Land*, a book about a human raised by Martians who founds a new religion. Or *I Will Fear No Evil* – in which two souls share a body after a brain transplant.

Guilty SF/fantasy pleasure

→ Does being a former *Dungeons & Dragons* obsessive count as a guilty pleasure? We honour the memory of Crothnor, the chaotic good fighter, who was cruelly killed off by Dungeon Master Andy Robinson.

Tom Watson is the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and can be found on Twitter at @tom_watson.

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SCI-FACT! **Brandon Routh's co-star in *400 Days* is Caity Lotz – Canary in *Legends Of Tomorrow*, in which Routh plays the Atom.**

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

400 DAYS



The indie apocalyptic sci-fi thriller where nothing is quite what it seems

IT'S ABOUT FOUR ASTRONAUTS

1 But the movie is totally Earth-bound. Brandon Routh, Caity Lotz, Ben Feldman and Dane Cook play a quartet of trainee space-folk who are locked in an underground simulator for 400 days to emulate the effects of being on a spaceship. Routh says, "It's an intriguing premise to understand what would happen to four wannabe astronauts in those conditions who are allowed absolutely no contact with the outside world."

THINGS GET A LITTLE CLAUSTROPHOBIC

2 Two of the astronauts start to hallucinate and things get strained between Routh's character, Theo, and Emily (Lotz), who had broken off their engagement just prior to starting the exercise. "The simulator itself isn't very large and the set was white and sterile, like a spaceship," says Routh. "We shot the entire movie over 21 days so it was quite intimate for the cast and crew in there! And very claustrophobic."

IT ALL GOES HORRIBLY WRONG

3 Midway through the exercise the astronauts lose most of their power and hear huge booming noises from above, and contact with mission control fails. Venturing outside they find that some kind of apocalyptic event has occurred... but is it all part of the simulation? Routh says, "While we were filming, director Matt Osterman was very tight-lipped about what was real and what wasn't, which meant the cast were having to make up their own minds as we went along. Was it all part of the ruse? Had it really happened?"

THEY FIND SURVIVORS

4 One nearby town seems to have survived the devastation – if it's really happened – but the townsfolk are suspicious, menacing and ultimately threatening. Does Routh think such a situation would bring out the worst of human nature? "Having a family I understand the rationale to want to protect yourself and your loved ones first and foremost, but I'd hope that eventually people would work together for the greater good. I'm an eternal optimist!"

WE'RE KEPT GUESSING THROUGHOUT

5 The strength of the movie is its hallucinatory paranoia. "Has there really been a disaster? Are the townsfolk part of the simulation? Are they even real?" says Routh. "It was a fun film to make, with a great cast and crew, but it's very intense." And no superheroics for the man who played Superman and now DC stablemate the Atom? "No," laughs Routh. "There is action and fighting but it's a different style... real, grim and gritty."

400 Days is released on DVD on 23 May.





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SCI-FACT! As well as co-writing two episodes of *The X-Files*, William Gibson made an appearance in "First Person Shooter".



As if fighting Nazis wasn't bad enough...

AUTHOR EXCLUSIVE

FOO FIGHTER

William Gibson wants you to believe in his first comic, *Archangel*

Describing it as "*Band Of Brothers* versus *Blackwater*", *Neuromancer* scribe William Gibson's first comic book, *Archangel*, takes place not in some far-flung cyberpunk future but in an alternate 1940s.

Developed with the actor Michael St John Smith, the IDW miniseries started out as a speculative TV pitch to a German producer looking for ideas set around World War Two.

"I remembered reading about the magnificently whack-ass Nazi flying saucer mythology. Our brief treatment evidently offended the producer," laughs Gibson, "but by then we had this rudimentary world on the table, so it turned out to be initially more a world-building exercise than anything else."

Gibson is relishing his partnership not just with co-scripter Smith but also with artist Butch Guice. "The commonality for me is that the ideas emerge from conversation, such as with *The Difference Engine*, which came about after Bruce Sterling told me about Charles Babbage, who I'd never heard of," he explains. "That didn't happen again until I told Mike about foo fighters, ghost rockets, World War Two bomber-crew mythology and pre-saucers." Thus, *Archangel* was born.

"It's a parallel universe story that reads more like a time travel story," he reveals. "The good guys, who are not entirely good, are Allied intelligence officers and a German black marketer in Berlin in 1945. There's also one good guy who is, like the bad guys, from what's left of the United States, circa 2016. That's a timeline where America made a single very different move, back in their 1945, which led to single technology emerging a hundred years earlier than it did for us."

Archangel #1 is published by IDW in May.

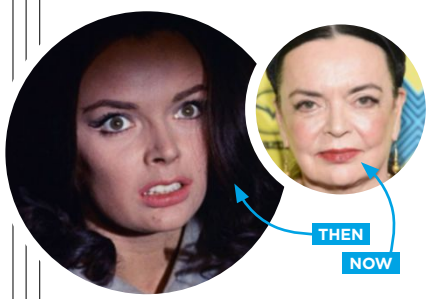
AFTERLIFE

CELEBRATING ICONIC SCI-FI STARS

115

BARBARA STEELE

Julia Hoffman in Dark Shadows



Barbara Steele is a legend of the horror genre, having starred in such cult classics as *Black Sunday* (1960), *The Pit And The Pendulum* (1961) and *Shivers* (1975). The raven-haired heroine also made her mark on *Dark Shadows* when she appeared as Julia Hoffman in the 1991 revival – though she was not keen on the 2012 film. "I do love Tim Burton but I felt that it was rather overdone and overwrought," she reveals.

What's the strangest request that you have ever had from a fan?
→ I get so many! A lot of them are sent to me by letter and I have no idea how they got my address. I have been asked to visit people in places I have never even heard of. I read once that all assassins use lined paper. So when I open an envelope and I see lined paper I panic a little...

Would you like to play Julia again?
→ I certainly would not want to do a cameo in another remake. I did not like how they brought some of the original cast from the series into the film. It was as if they were just a bunch of extras rather than the stars who had inspired this big movie.

Were you a SF/fantasy fan before you starred in the show?
→ Not really, although I was familiar with the genre through my previous work.

What would it say on Julia's tombstone?
→ Something simple like "I will be back".

© GETTY (1)

SCI-FACT! **Affleck had a panic room in his old house, hidden behind a sliding bookcase. How very Bruce Wayne!**

FIVE MINUTES WITH...

BEN AFFLECK

The actor/director on becoming *Batman*...

WAYNE'S NEW MANNER

"Zack [Snyder, director] wanted to explore that the Bruce Wayne side of Batman was also a mask. The 'playboy philanthropist' was a character used to throw people off the scent of his secret identity, but also a way to fill this void inside him. He does have these bimbo girls over and doesn't shy away from that which I thought was interesting and darker."

OPPOSING WORLD VIEWS

"[Batman and Superman] become enemies at the end of *Man Of Steel* when that building comes down; they just don't know it. Superman is very suspicious and sees Batman as a vigilante. Bruce Wayne is going out as Batman and getting more and more violent. Clark Kent is becoming upset by this and wants to write a story about it for the *Daily Planet*."

OPEN TO INSTRUCTION

"I come to work and say, 'Where do you want me?' I'm very mindful of not saying, 'Why don't we do this?' because it's not my movie."

CREATING CREDIBLE ADVERSARIES

"The problem with Superman is you have to trick it out and skew it, otherwise he's too strong. Villains have to be from outer space like Darkseid. We had to find ways to balance it out but Zack and Chris [Terrio, screenwriter] did it in an artful way so it wasn't silly or convenient."

JUSTICE LEAGUE GOALS

"There's this and a Wonder Woman movie before *Justice League*. I've been lucky to be privy to the inside scoop of the plans and it's really exciting. I am usually pretty cynical but I've been jazzed by what I've seen."

Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice is in cinemas now.

CONTOUR/GETTY

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SCI-FACT! **Whitley Strieber is best known for *Communion*, a book that details his own abduction experiences.**



SHOWRUNNER EXCLUSIVE

THEY'RE HERE

In Syfy's paranoid new thriller *Hunters* the aliens aren't invading – they're already living next door...

Nathan Phillips is an FBI agent searching for his wife.

Aliens secretly plotting humanity's downfall? A common theme in SF, but Syfy's upcoming *Hunters* puts a new spin on the old scenario. Based on Whitley Strieber's bestselling novel *Alien Hunter*, the series finds FBI agent Flynn Carroll (Nathan Phillips) investigating the disappearance of his wife. When he crosses paths with a covert division of Homeland Security, however, he discovers that they have a common enemy...

"My starting point was, 'What bothers me about alien mythology?'" explains executive producer Natalie Chaidez. "It's like, 'If aliens are here, why aren't they taking over already? What's taking them so long?' I started working backwards and came up with a mythology that explained, 'What if they were here, but they weren't super-powerful?'"

These extraterrestrials, known as Hunters, may not possess the technology to obliterate the Earth with the push of a button, but they are still a formidable foe. They have successfully infiltrated the human race, after all.

"The Hunters are stronger than humans," says Chaidez. "Their main advantage is this super-powerful hearing. It's quite important to them on their home planet. Sound is not only crucial to the Hunters' species, but to the show.

"The Hunters are acting as a terrorist organisation," she continues. "They are bombing and stealing in an effort to raise money, to what end we aren't sure. They are committing crimes and this unit is chasing them."

Chaidez intends to avoid many of the clichés associated with alien invasion shows. Don't expect any lights in the sky or crashed UFOs at Roswell. In addition, she's determined not to string viewers along with dangling plotlines...

"The first season is really about unravelling who the Hunters are, what they are doing here, what they want and how do we stop them?" explains Chaidez. "We're building towards a big surprise at the end of the season. What you think they want is perhaps not where their true agenda lies.

"I feel strongly about knowing where the show is going and answering questions," Chaidez concludes. "It's a little unfair to not answer stuff. The big questions will be answered by the end of season one, but another bigger question will arise as well. Stuff will be answered but with more mysteries to come."

Hunters airs 11 April on Syfy in the US, UK broadcast TBC.

AERIAL ASSAULT

SCI-FI TV ROUND UP

→ ***Community*'s Danny Pudi and *Firefly*'s Alan Tudyk have signed up for new superhero sitcom Powerless.**
→ **Jonathan Frakes is set to appear as Star-Lord's dad in the Guardians Of The Galaxy animated series.**
→ **WGN America is developing an adaptation of classic SF novel Roadside Picnic by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky.**
→ **Patrick Fischler and David Dastmalchian have joined the apparently endless cast of Twin Peaks season three.**
→ **Syfy are developing a new post-apocalyptic drama called Aftermath.**
→ **Lady Gaga is set to return to American Horror Story for season six. Do try to contain your excitement.**
→ **In other pop news, electro star Peaches is set to guest star on Orphan Black.**
→ **Goran Visnjic cast as the villain in a new NBC time-travel drama called, uh, Time.**
→ **New Star Trek show not airing until early 2017.**



DON'T QUOTE ME

"ET TU, D-POOL? GIMME A SHOUT WHEN ROGERS BOOTS YOU OUT FOR 'CUSSING'!"

Robert Downey Jr responds to Ryan Reynolds who tweeted a simple "#TeamCap" after Chris Evans praised the *Deadpool* movie.



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EXCLUSIVE INCENTIVES

SCI-FACT! Wonder Woman was originally very nearly called Suprema, the Wonder Woman.

DC REBIRTH

It's reboot time (again) for the venerable comics outfit

WHEN IS A REBOOT NOT A REBOOT?

The rumours were building for weeks. DC Comics was planning something big that would encompass their entire superhero line. At the ComicsPRO event in February, Co-Publisher Dan DiDio revealed the truth. DC Rebirth is a relaunch programme that aims to restore the legacy to DC Comics that its previous refresh, the New 52, erased.

RIP IT UP AND START AGAIN

Let's backtrack a little. Once upon a time, DC's continuity was a tangle of alternate realities. In 1986 *Crisis On Infinite Earths* streamlined everything into a coherent continuity. It worked, but DC continued to tinker with things. Deciding that a clean slate was needed, 2011's *Flashpoint* storyline kickstarted the New 52 – a reboot which wiped out decades of character history and started again.

COURTING CONTROVERSY

Rebirth is an attempt to restore some of that history – though how we don't yet know. The event kicks off with *DC Rebirth* #1, by Geoff Johns, Ethan Van Sciver, Ivan Reis, Phil Jiminez and Gary Frank. Dan DiDio has promised that it will feature "the single most controversial scene in DC Comics in the time I've been there". Yay?

WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?

There's nothing comics publishers love more than a new #1, and *Rebirth* gives DC the chance to slap them across almost all of its titles. The notable exceptions are Superman and Batman titles *Action Comics* and *Detective Comics*, which will be returning to their pre-*Flashpoint* numbers. So, #957 and #934 respectively.

IT WILL COST YOU LESS... KIND OF

Instead of using this an opportunity for a price hike, DC is taking the opposite approach, reducing their issue costs to $2.99 (they're currently $3.99). That's smart – it encourages new readers while also taking the sting out of this next piece of news: 10 of the more popular titles like *Batman*, *Superman*, *The Flash* and *Wonder Woman* will be moving to a fortnightly schedule.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW...

DC is being cagey about exactly who is writing and drawing what, but we know some of the titles. As well as the big books there are some intriguing spin-offs like *The Super-Man* and *Super Sons*, along with books for lesser-known characters like the Blue Beetle. More troubling is the apparent cancellation of diversity-friendly titles like *Secret Six*, *Midnighter*, *Doctor Fate* and *Black Canary*.

WHO IS THIS AIMED AT?

Rebirth looks like an attempt by DC to have its cake and eat it. It's bringing back the elements of the old continuity that fans missed, while also looking to entice new fans with new #1 issues. It's a bit of a gamble to start over again so soon after the New 52, but it may just work...

WHEN DOES IT START?

DC Rebirth #1, by Geoff Johns, kicks the whole thing off on Wednesday 25 May.



NEWS WARP

HIGH-SPEED FACTS

→ Sony's **Venom** movie lives! *Edge Of Tomorrow*'s Dante Harper has been hired to pen a script unconnected to the wider MCU.
→ Joseph Gordon-Levitt has departed the **Sandman** movie, while **The Conjuring 2**'s writer Eric Heisserer has joined it.
→ **Joss Whedon** to pen a Captain America 75th anniversary comic for Marvel, with art by John Cassaday.
→ The **Gambit** solo movie has been mysteriously removed from Fox's schedules.
→ JK Rowling releases four new **Potterverse** stories detailing magic in America.
→ JK Simmons cast as Commissioner Gordon in **Justice League**. It's a good month for JKs.
→ Sony's new **Spider-Man** film casts Zendaya in an unspecified role.
→ **River Song** to meet the Sixth and Seventh Doctors in a new audio series from Big Finish.
→ Fletcher Moules has been hired to direct an animated **Ghostbusters** film.



REX (1)

DON'T QUOTE ME

"WHY CAN'T A REGULAR PERSON BE A GHOSTBUSTER? I'M CONFUSED. AND WHY CAN'T I BE THE ONE WHO PLAYS THEM? I AM A PERFORMER."

Leslie Jones hits back at criticisms of her casting as a civilian, rather than another scientist, in *Ghostbusters*.



SCI-FACT! **Hannah John-Kamen – aka Dutch in *Killjoys* – also played a First Order trooper in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*.**

NEW AUTHOR

GAVIN CHAIT

THE DEVELOPMENT ECONOMIST ON HIS DEBUT SF THRILLER, *LAMENT FOR THE FALLEN*



What's *Lament For The Fallen* about?
→ Samara escapes from the space-based prison Tartarus, smashing into the jungle near an isolated Nigerian village. He's injured and losing his sanity to the synthetic intelligence with which he shares his mind.

Did you spend time in Nigeria?
→ Yes and knowing that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I took a road-trip to Calabar to experience the city where much of the novel would be set. The narrative is definitely improved by my time there.

How did your work as an economist impact the book?
→ The central motif is that, "even as some would explore the stars, remember that many who remain behind scratch out an existence of near starvation in the dust so easily shed." A technologically advanced society will not necessarily have universal distribution of that technology.

How long have you been writing?
→ For decades. I started *Lament* when I was 12. Originally, the story was a simple jail-break tale that saw prisoners forced to run the gauntlet of robotic assassins.



Are you working on a second novel?
→ It's almost complete and it's set in Senegal where terrorists and energy tsars are conspiring to prevent the development of new solar farms that threaten their control of the region.

Lament For The Fallen is published in hardback by Doubleday on 28 July.



The Killjoys ready to pick themselves up and dust themselves off...

SHOWRUNNER EXCLUSIVE

AGENTS OF CHANGE

The space mercenaries of *Killjoys* are back for a second season and a new set of threats...

Everything went to hell for our three bounty hunters in *Killjoys*' season one finale. D'Avin (Luke Macfarlane) was locked away in the mysterious Red 17 facility, while Dutch (Hannah John-Kamen) and John (Aaron Ashmore) watched helplessly as Old Town was destroyed by the Nine. Executive producer Michelle Lovretta promises plenty of mysteries will unfold as the characters attempt to move on.

"As we explore the origin stories of both Dutch and Khlyen (Rob Stewart), and how they intersect, we realise increasingly a lot of what Khlyen has done has been his own twisted way of trying to protect Dutch," explains Lovretta. "This season, there's that core conflict of, 'I don't know how to forgive you for the things that you've done, but I'm mature enough to also acknowledge the good you have done for me as well.'

"Johnny has become a little more entrenched in Old Town and the human collateral of what being a Killjoy is and their position in the Quad," says Lovretta. "It starts John questioning what he stands for and whether he can stand entirely by Dutch and still be the man he wants to be."

As for Old Town, Lovretta describes the atmosphere as "pretty freaking dark".

"It's a very different vibe than where we left off," concludes Lovretta. "It has different rules to it and our people have to navigate that system all over again. We still have Pree (Thom Allison), Alvis (Morgan Kelly) and Pawter (Sarah Power), so we have people that are emotionally attached to the well-being of Old Town. We can clearly tell that our Killjoys are as well and feel a bit of a debt. They were obviously involved in some of the shenanigans that led to these great ills."

Killjoys season two airs this summer on Syfy.

CITY OF DREAMS

Kill Command and *The Call Up* are two of the films premiering at this year's *Sci-Fi-London* film festival

DATE
27 April-5 May

LOCATION
Various venues around London

In its 16 years, Sci-Fi-London has run 19 events, screened hundreds of films both new and old, and its famed 48 Hour Film Challenge spawned *Factory Farmed*, Gareth Edwards' short, which would go on to be the starting point for *Monsters*. We spoke to founder Louis Savy to find out what we can expect in 2016.



Call Up? I thought this was the queue for the cosplay...

Tell us about some of the films being screened this year...

We have the world premiere of *Kill Command*, which is great – robots and marines shooting each other, from the producers of *Monsters*. Alongside it is *Embers*, a fantastic, quite gentle film dealing with short term memory loss. We've also got a fabulous film called *Polder*, which is about Virtual Reality gaming – it's bizarre and I loved it. The closing night film is the premiere of *The Call Up*, with a Q&A afterwards.

Is there an all-nighter this year?

We're not doing an all-nighter, but there will be a 24-hour movie marathon! It will start on Sunday and finish on Monday with no breaks, just films back-to-back.

How many people take part in the 48 Hour Film Challenge each year?

Last year we had about 180 completed films. They're only five minutes long, but that's a huge amount of brand new SF films. Shorts are brilliant – you can just play with an idea for 10 minutes. We always have six or eight short film programmes alongside the features. We're also running a 48 Hour Flash Fiction challenge.

The event is going to be focusing on Virtual Reality, too, correct?

We'll be bringing together the best Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality experiences and playing with some of the latest technology. We're also going to be looking at some of the really old Victorian tech – we're all carrying around powerful phones in our pockets now which can make this old tech fresh again.



Interlude by Team Starcrust won the 2015 48 Hour Film Challenge.

Sci-Fi-London runs from 27 April to 5 May in various venues throughout London. www.sci-fi-london.com; www.facebook.com/scifilondon; Twitter: @scifilondon

DATE
29 April-1 May

LOCATION
Renaissance Hotel, Heathrow, London

'WOOD STOCK

The stars of *Torchwood* will be gathering in a hotel at Heathrow for the *Miracle Day 3* weekender



Gwen Cooper herself – aka nicest actress in the world Eve Myles – will be appearing at this three-day *Torchwood* convention at the Renaissance Hotel in Heathrow (very conveniently located if you're planning to arrive by private jet or helicopter, presumably). She's backed up by Kai Owen (Rhys on the show), Gareth David-Lloyd (the much-mourned Ianto Jones), Tom Price (Gwen's old sidekick PC Andy) and Arlene Tur (crispy-fried Vera Juarez from *Miracle Day*). Tickets start at £95, which gets you entry to all three days of the event, including all the talks and parties, an autograph from each of the headline guests, and a souvenir booklet. For £160, Gold Ticket owners get all of the above plus an invite to the Friday night meet-and-greet session, priority seating, and autographs from the bonus guests. It's a smaller event than some, perhaps, but these long-weekend cons tend to be a great place to meet other fans and really get to know the guests.

www.seanharry.com/events/torchwood

COMING UP

DOCTOR WHO: TARGET BOOKS ARTWORK
28 April–11 May
London's Cartoon Museum will host over 50 pieces of artwork used on the WH Allen/Target *Doctor Who* book lines.
cartoonmuseum.org

THE CAPITOL
7-8 May
Celebrate 40 years of the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society with this two-day convention at Gatwick. Sophie Aldred, Anneke Wills, John Levene and more will be in attendance.
bit.ly/dwas-capitol

CITY OF HEROES 2
13-15 May
Jason Momoa, John Barrowman, Robbie Amell, Emily Bett Rickards, and more hit Birmingham to celebrate TV's best superhero shows.
www.rogueevent.co.uk

MCM IRELAND COMIC CON
2-3 July
Doctor Whos Sylvester McCoy and Peter Davison will be joining comic artist Bob Layton in Dublin for this two-day event full of sci-fi and comics fun.
bit.ly/mcm-ire

DESTINATION STAR TREK EUROPE
7-9 October
Celebrate *Trek*'s 50th anniversary with a host of guests from various incarnations of the franchise, including Marina Sirtis, Jonathan Frakes, Christopher Lloyd and Walter Koenig.
bit.ly/trekeurope

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Gareth David Lloyd
Kai Owen
Tom Price
Arlene Tur

MIRACL 3 DAY

29 April - May 1, 2016
Renaissance Hotel, Heathrow

SCI-FACT! **Sigourney Weaver was offered a cameo in the film, but allegedly quipped that she'd only do it if she could play Slimer.**

GHOSTBUSTERS

OUT 15 JULY 2016

Proton Packs on, there's something strange in the neighbourhood...



"30 years ago, four scientists saved New York." Despite that caption, director Paul Feig has confirmed that this is a reboot.



Looks like New York's famous 8th Hook & Ladder fire station will once again be the Ghostbusters' base of operations.



Some odd *Dark Knight Rises* vibes here, but it's great to see the film riff on Michael Gross's iconic No Ghosts logo.



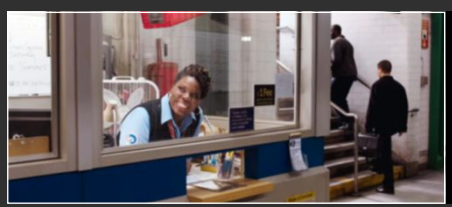
"That's a Class 4 apparition." Hooray! This looks like a direct nod to the library ghost scene from the original movie.



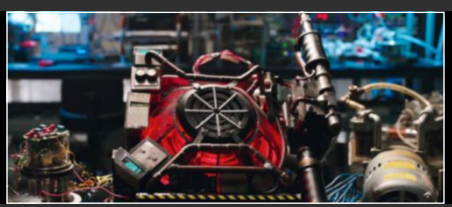
Complete with buckets of goop! Well, it wouldn't be a *Ghostbusters* movie without someone getting covered in slime.



Meet the new team! From left: Jillian Holtzmann (Kate McKinnon), Erin Gilbert (Kristen Wiig) and Abby Yates (Melissa McCarthy)...



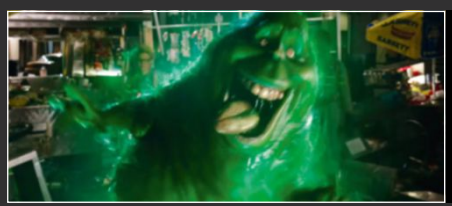
...and Leslie Jones plays Patty Tolan, a New York City Subway worker who joins the team after a spooky encounter..



Our first good look at the new style Proton Packs – different, but with the same cobbled-together spirit of the originals.



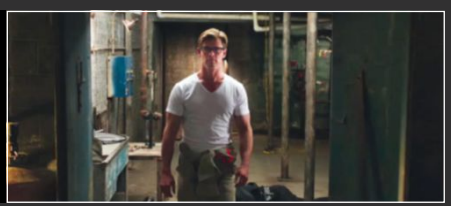
"I can borrow a car from my uncle!" Yes, Ecto-1 is back – though this time it's a Cadillac hearse, rather an ambulance.



Slimer! The spook was a breakout star after the first *Ghostbusters*, becoming the gang's pet in the *Real Ghostbusters* cartoon.



Looks like there's a timeslip of sorts – check the way the screens in Times Square transform into posters for *Taxi Driver* and *Snake People*.



Chris Hemsworth completes the cast as Kevin, the team's extremely buff secretary – here possessed, by the look of things.

The Buzz



RICH I'm loving the look of this – it's fun, I already like the characters, and it walks the tricky line between making nods to the original and feeling like something different. Sign me up.



RHIAN Captures the "feel" of the originals pretty well from the moment the music kicks in, and I *love* Holtzmann's specs. But would it have been too much to hope for a few more jokes?



RUSSELL I didn't particularly care for the original films and doubt I'll see this one, but this trailer seems okay, a couple of smiles. Shame the music didn't burst into "Ghostbusters!"

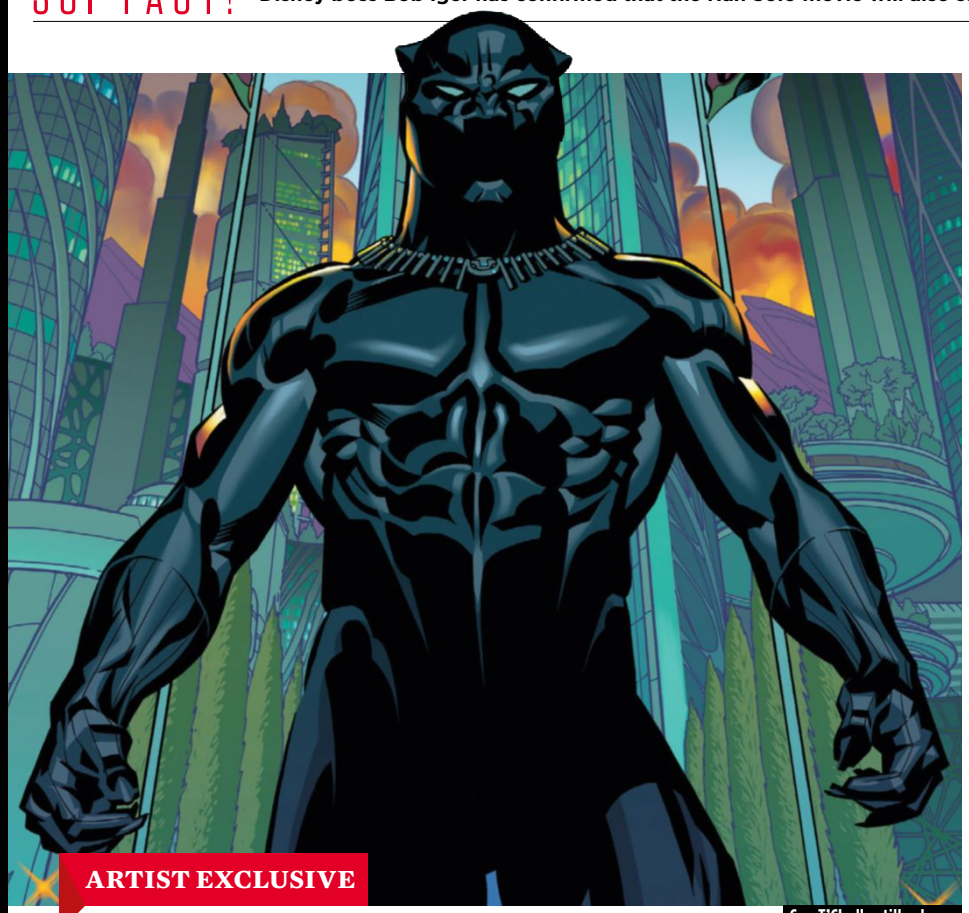


WILL Liking the retro stylings of the spooks and it all feels very *Ghostbusters*. Looking forward to it! The whole "30 years ago..." thing is a tad perplexing though, given that this is a reboot.


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SCI-FACT! **Disney boss Bob Iger has confirmed that the Han Solo movie will also star Chewbacca.**



ARTIST EXCLUSIVE

Can T'Challa still rule his kingdom when he's out saving the world?

CAT PEOPLE

Ta-Nehisi Coates and Brian Stelfreeze get their claws into *Black Panther*

Set to be brought to life on the big screen by Chadwick Boseman in the upcoming *Captain America: Civil War*, Black Panther will first return to monthly comics in a new solo book written by Ta-Nehisi Coates and drawn by Brian Stelfreeze. Set primarily in Wakanda, the opening storyline "A Nation Under Our Feet" sees T'Challa's right to rule the mythical African kingdom challenged by superhuman terrorist group The People.

"Ta-Nehisi starts with a question, 'How can the world's most technologically advanced nation still have one of the most ancient forms of governance?'" Stelfreeze tells *SFX*. "This could get even more complicated when you consider that the king is often out of the country, so we're exploring thoughts that come from attempts to answer those questions."

Admitting that he's "only seen what everyone else has in the previews," Stelfreeze is looking forward to seeing exactly how T'Challa is portrayed in the upcoming *Civil War* movie. "I'm dying to know what their approach to the character is, and if it will have any resemblance to ours," he says. "I've had varying degrees of disappointment with most of the superhero genre movies but *Captain America* has been the exception, so I'm really excited to see Black Panther in the cinema."

With *Creed*'s Ryan Coogler having signed on to direct Black Panther's 2018 solo outing, Stelfreeze hopes that some synergy can be developed between the comics and the films. "They operate almost in separate worlds, so I can't really take on too much of an influence from the movies," he says. "But if it's not too arrogant for me to say, I hope they can take a lead from us."

Black Panther #1 is released by Marvel on 6 April.

STAR WATCH

A NEWS HOPE



Gary explains the thinking behind *Ep VIII*'s working title.

→ *Star Wars: Episode VIII* has a name, and it's... *Space Bear*. Okay, it's just a working title, a 21st century *Blue Harvest* (revealed by Carrie Fisher's dog, Gary, on Twitter), but it's a start – fingers crossed it doesn't mean an invasion of Ewoks.

One thing we do know is that Luke Skywalker and the still-surnameless Rey will pick up where they left off on that remote island. How? We've seen new writer/director Rian Johnson at work on the Irish island of Skellig Michael in Lucasfilm's official start-of-production teaser, while star Daisy Ridley told MTV, "When we went back to Skellig to do the opening of *Episode VIII*, it was so crazy doing the same scene with a different crew of people. Me and Mark [Hamill] have been rehearsing a lot. He's amazing to rehearse with, and I'm very excited to be doing the rest of the stuff. It's such a good story. Seriously. Luke is so cool in this one." So we may actually get to see some proper Skywalker action this time. Who knows, he may even get a trip to the beautiful Croatian city of Dubrovnik out of it – the regular *Game Of Thrones* location is strongly rumoured to feature in *Episode VIII*.

It also looks like the forcefield of secrecy on the Johnson's movie may be a little lighter than it was under JJ Abrams. In another interview, this time with *Entertainment Tonight*, Ridley hinted her new boss will be more of a tease: "I think Rian actually wants to be a bit cheekier with the little tidbits of information that are going out, which is fun."

Elsewhere, */Film* reported that footage from the non-saga *Rogue One* was revealed at a recent Disney presentation. Their source appeared to confirm rumours that it's set directly before *A New Hope*, features black-suited Stormtroopers, and has a real *A New Hope* vibe. With a December release date locked in, it can't be long before we see a trailer – those Death Star plans won't steal themselves...

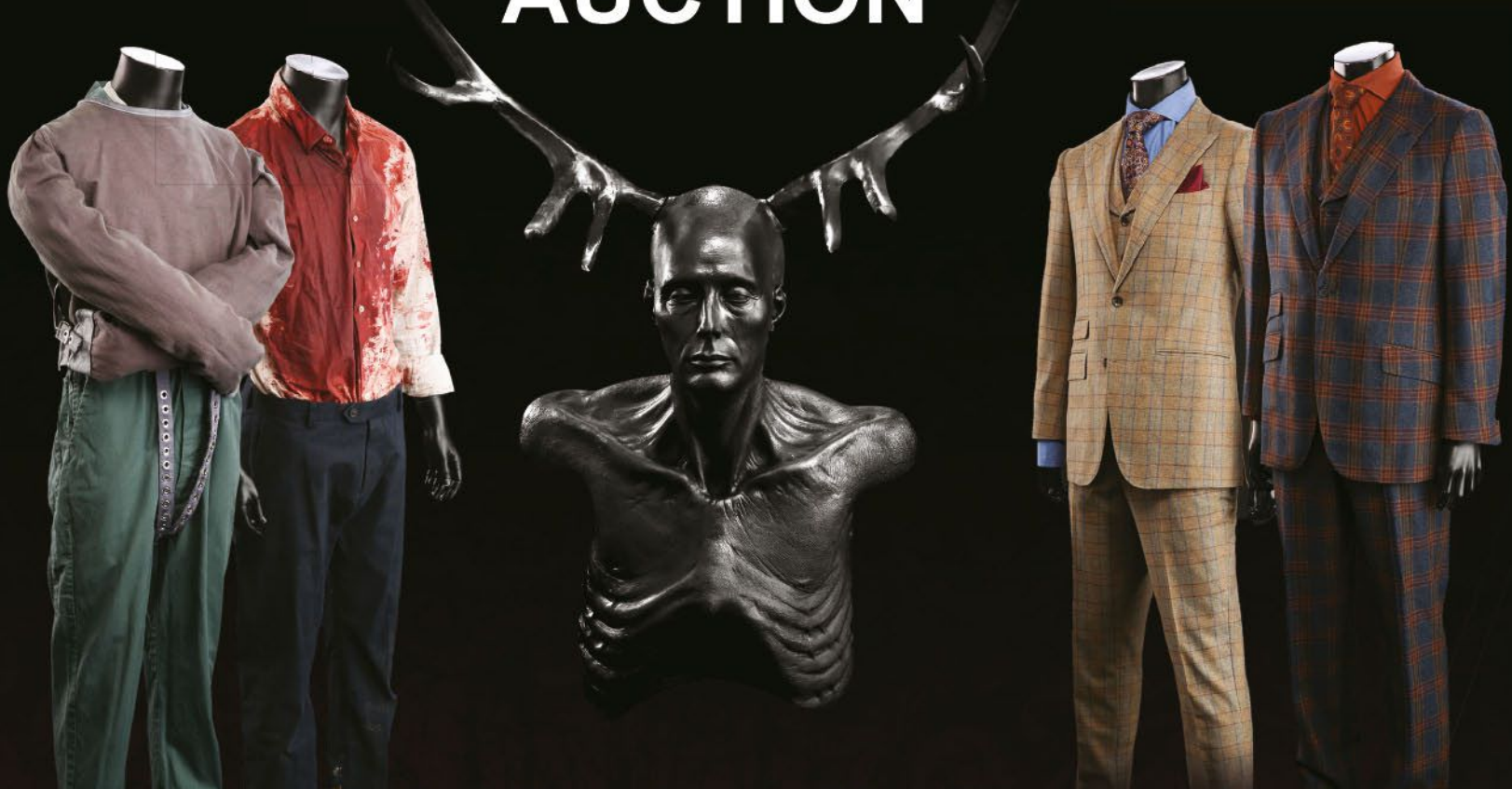
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SCI-FACT! ***Civil War II*** **is said to kick off with the death of a major superhero – mirroring the end of the original** ***Civil War*** **in 2007.**



SPACE IS THE PLACE

Journey to the stars with some stunning retro travel posters released by NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. There are 14 in total, each one promoting a different galactic destination. Beautifully illustrated, they're available to download for free in high resolution at www.jpl.nasa.gov/visions-of-the-future/ and look gorgeous printed and framed.



CHOOSE YOUR SIDE

Marvel has begun teasing its forthcoming epic *Civil War II* in earnest with the release of several character posters drawn by Phil Noto. Written by Brian Michael Bendis, the story sees Marvel's superheroes pitched against each other once more when a new character arrives with the ability to predict the future. Captain Marvel believes that this should be used to prevent crimes before they happen, while Iron Man takes the opposing viewpoint. *Minority Report* with superheroes? Count us in.

TAKING NOTE

This set of *Doctor Who* Notebooks from Coleman Design reimagines four classic *Who* adventures as Penguin Books. We especially like the simplicity of *The God Complex* and the eerie black and orange skeleton on *Silence In The Library*. Each one comes with 48 pages of blank paper, and a digitally printed, 300gsm silk stock cover. colemandesign.co.uk.



SCI-FACT! **Joe Abercrombie's *Half A King* picked up the Locus Award for Best Young Adult Novel in 2015.**



The movie utilises Jerusalem's setting, mythology and history.

DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE

DEAD RISING

The zombie movie gets a smart tech twist in *Jeruzalem*

Google Glass might not have quite captured the imagination... but it's risen from the almost-dead thanks to a new Israeli apocalyptic zombie movie. *Jeruzalem*, directed by Tel Aviv-based brothers Yoav and Doron Paz, uses the tech to tell an end-of-the-world story *Cloverfield*-style.

American tourists Sarah and Rachel head for a party-fuelled holiday in Jerusalem, falling in with slightly nerdy Kevin who persuades them to leave the well-trod paths for a look at the real Holy City after dark... just as the undead return.

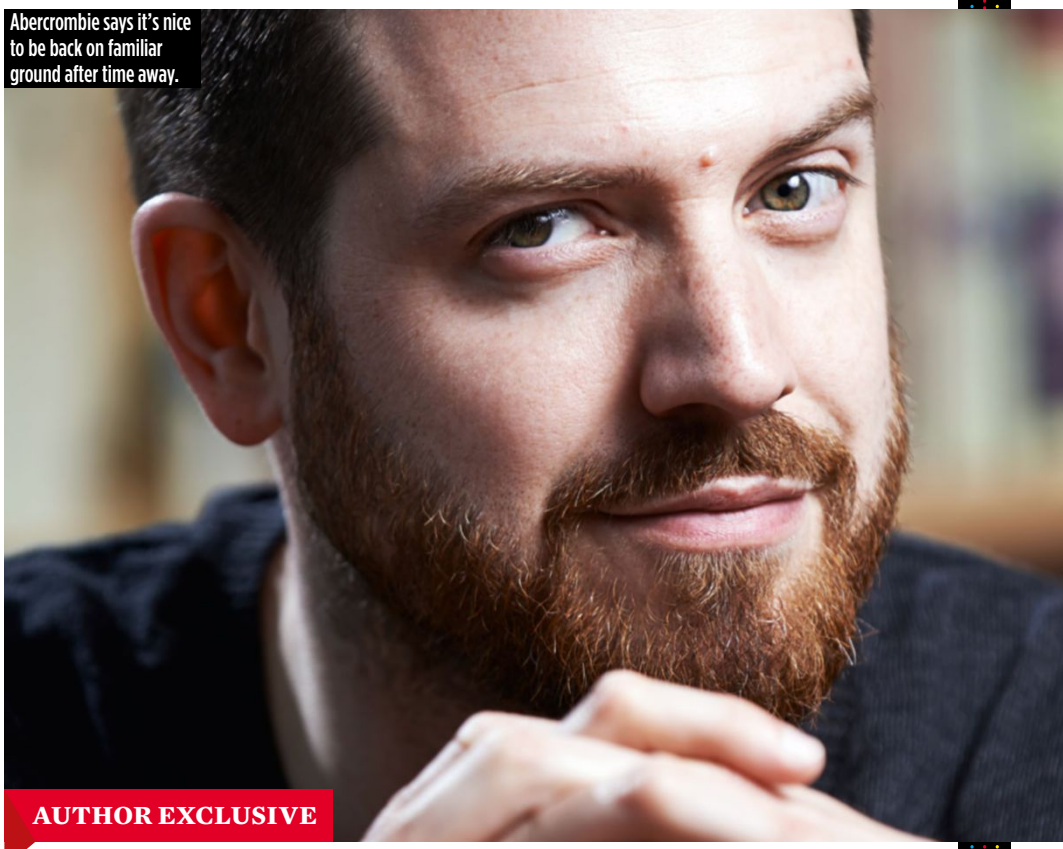
"We wanted to make a horror movie set in Jerusalem for years," says Doron Paz. "But we wanted to show the *real* Jerusalem, not just ones that the travel shows portray."

Jerusalem has been invaded by the undead before of course – in the Brad Pitt-led *World War Z*. But that's something of a standing joke among Israelites. "When the helicopter flies up you can see the ocean," laughs Doron. "You can't see the ocean anywhere from Jerusalem!"

The desire to show the "real" city led to some logistical problems, however. "You can't just close down the Wailing Wall or the Holy City for shooting, so we had to do it guerrilla-style."

He adds: "Using smart glasses for the POV gave us a whole new layer... it's traditional storytelling combined with modern technology."

Jeruzalem arrives on UK digital on 28 March 2016 and DVD/Blu-ray on 4 April.



Abercrombie says it's nice to be back on familiar ground after time away.

AUTHOR EXCLUSIVE

MASTER OF LAW

Lord Grimdark himself, *Joe Abercrombie*, tells all about his new short story collection

Waiting for the next novel set in the world of The First Law? You'll have to hang on a little longer. But fans of Joe Abercrombie's work should be more than satisfied with *Sharp Ends* – a collection of 13 stories set in the same realm.

"It's like slipping on a favourite pair of boots," says Abercrombie of returning to the setting for the first time since 2012's *Red Country*. "It's nice to be on familiar ground after time away."

He describes the collection as featuring a "galaxy of different voices" and a wide-range of genres. The backbone, however, is provided by a new pair of characters, "Shev, the best thief in Styria, and Javre, Lioness of Hoskopp", described as "really my female take on Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser".

Longest of the 13 tales is the novella-length "Three's A Crowd", which Abercrombie says is about Shev trying to put her past behind her. "She wants to start a new life, but when her lover is kidnapped she's forced to recruit Javre for one last job..."

He also states that the stories act "as background to some of the novels and feature familiar characters, the style of which vary from Italianate crime caper to dried-up Western". He hopes the book will be accessible to new readers, pointing out that, "all the stories stand alone to some degree."

Meanwhile, the next novel continues to gestate. "I'm writing a new trilogy," he promises. "I want to take my time, really develop the voices of the cast and hopefully draft the whole trilogy before I publish the first book, so the whole thing is as coherent and convincing as possible."

Sharp Ends is published by Gollancz in hardback and ebook versions on 26 April.

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Nick Setchfield's

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CHIM-CHIM-CHER-EE ETC!

MARY POPPINS 2

Winds in the east, mist coming in, like somethin' is brewin' and 'bout to begin... The belated sequel to *Mary Poppins* moves ever nearer to the screen with the news that *Edge Of Tomorrow*'s ***Emily Blunt*** is in talks to play PL Travers' magical nanny, originally brought to life by Julie Andrews in Disney's 1964 classic. She's a practically perfect choice in every way. Well, aside from the fact that Julie Andrews is still around... Set to be helmed by *Into The Woods*' ***Rob Marshall***, the movie shifts the action to the 1930s and raids plot elements from Travers' other books, particularly the second one, *Mary Poppins Comes Back*. *Hamilton*'s ***Lin-Manuel Miranda*** is tipped for the role of Jack, a London lamplighter, and is also expected to help write some new songs, doubtlessly to be belted out in a wonky cockney accent.

THE WHEEL OF KA TURNS!

THE DARK TOWER

The whispers in the Waste Lands were true. ***Idris Elba*** has officially scored the role of Roland the Gunslinger in the big-screen version of ***Stephen King***'s epic fantasy Western. "For me it just clicked," says director ***Nikolaj Arcel***. "We absolutely had all the same ideas and thoughts. He had a unique vision for who Roland would be." King approves: "For me the character is still the character," he tells *Entertainment Weekly*. "He can be white or black, it makes no difference to me. I think it opens all kind of exciting possibilities for the backstory." *Interstellar*'s



Illustration by Paul Cemmick

Matthew McConaughey is a lock for sinister necromancer the Man in Black, racing against Roland to reach the titular tower, a structure that stands at the nexus of time, space and literature. Expect some tweaks to the sprawling saga, not least that this won't be an adaptation of the first book, 1982's *The Gunslinger*. King says the movie begins "in the middle of the story" and it seems a chunk of the film will take place in our reality, in the modern world. Filming begins in South Africa this spring, targeting a 13 January 2017 release.

MERCENARY RISING!

DEADPOOL 2

Watch out, fourth wall – the Merc with the mouth is coming back to break you all over again. Yes, proving the previously untapped box office appetite for ultra-violence, killer putdowns and meta-textuality, the triumph of the first Deadpool movie means a sequel's a cert. But don't look for a sudden injection of cash (you know Deadpool's already blown most of it on strippers and chimichangas). "We don't want $150 million to go make the next movie," screenwriter ***Paul Wernick*** tells *Collider*. "That's not Deadpool. Deadpool doesn't lift cities up into the air or battle aliens coming down to Earth. That's just not Deadpool. So we're happy in that little small budget range that they have us in; we don't wanna blow this next one out." Expect *Deadpool 2* either 6 October 2017 or 12 January 2018, two dates Twentieth Century Fox have already ringed for an unnamed pair of X-movies.

D&D R&D!

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

And lo, once again Hollywood rolls the d12... Yes, there's another cinematic take on legendary tabletop time-stealer *Dungeons & Dragons* on the way. The game sputtered on to the big screen in eminently forgettable form back in 2000 but the franchise's dungeonmasters are looking to summon some Marvel style box office sorcery. "This new *Dungeons & Dragons* will be a *Guardians Of The Galaxy*-tone movie in a Tolkien universe," producer ***Roy Lee*** (*The Lego Movie*) tells *Collider*. "When you think of all the *Hobbit* movies and *The Lord Of The Rings*, they have an earnestness to them, and to see something fun, a *Raiders* romp inside that world, I feel is something the audience has not seen before." The screenplay's by *Wrath Of The Titans*' ***David Leslie Johnson*** and Lee is already talking up an entire dice-powered movie universe, complete with spin-offs and crossovers. That's epic level.

ALSO BURNING



→ **Julianne Moore up for the villain in *Kingsman 2*... *Spartacus*'s Steven S DeKnight directing *Pacific Rim 2*... Ryan Reynolds in talks for Mars mission tale *Life*... *The Wolverine*'s James Mangold directing *Captain Nemo* for Disney (not to be confused with Bryan Singer's *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* for Twentieth Century Fox)... *Rogue One*'s Diego Luna orbiting Sony's *Flatliners* remake alongside Ellen Page... Sam Raimi directing *World War 3*... *Transformers 5* filming in Detroit this summer... Tye Sheridan starring in Steven Spielberg's *Ready Player One*... *The Lego Movie*'s Dan and Kevin Hageman polishing the screenplay of Guillermo del Toro's *Scary Stories To Tell In The Dark*... *Monsters University* director Dan Scanlon helming *Cars 3*... Bold Films developing superhero tale *Samaritan*... Roger Corman producing *Death Race 2050*, rebooting 1975's *Death Race 2000*... New Line developing a live-action *Astro Boy* with a screenplay by *San Andreas*' Andre Fabrizio and Jeremy Passmore... Jon Turteltaub in talks to helm giant shark tale *Meg*...**

> "Roland can be white or black, it makes no difference to me"

BIG TROUBLE IN OUTER SPACE!

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL 2

The galaxy keeps expanding... New additions to Marvel's next slice of hiply-soundtracked space opera include *The Man From UNCLE*'s fiendishly glam nemesis ***Elizabeth Debicki***, *The Knick*'s ***Chris Sullivan*** and *Sons Of Anarchy* regular ***Tommy Flanagan***, cast as Yondu's second-in-command. Also confirmed is the mighty ***Kurt Russell***, still valiantly attempting to top the career high of 1969's *The Computer Wore Tennis Shoes* (you'll doubtlessly know him best from *The Thing* and *Escape From New York*). No one's saying exactly who Russell's playing but he's tipped to be the mysterious loins from which Star-Lord sprung. Director ***James Gunn*** says that Thanos doesn't factor into the sequel – "We've got other fish to fry" – but it's rumoured that the film sees the Ravagers take out a bounty on Rocket Raccoon. *Vol 2* hits 5 May 2017. Hey, Groot, need a little more Miracle-Gro, fella?

PIN CITY!

HELLRAISER: JUDGEMENT

Diverting news for all souls suffering the infinite agonies of Hell: we have a brand new Pinhead. ***Paul T Taylor*** is set to be the walking health and safety hazard in the next film based on ***Clive Barker***'s saga of blood and damnation. He's the third Pinhead, in fact, following ***Doug Bradley***, who originated ol' kebab-bonce back in 1987 and played him a staggering seven more times – that's a whole load of unending torment – and ousting ***Stephan Smith Collins***, who starred in 2011's universally savaged *Hellraiser: Revelations*. Taylor's popped up in everything from *Sin City* to *Prison Break* and will lead the Cenobites in a film that's officially a sequel and not, as rumoured, a reboot. Directed by make-up wiz ***Gary J Tunnicliffe***, the next instalment finds a trio of detectives investigating what appears to be a particularly gruesome serial killer case, only to discover "a spiralling maze of horror that may not be of this world". What are the chances?

WE'RE EXPECTING YOU, MR BOND!

JAMES BOND 25

Exotic locations have been a staple of the Bond franchise ever since Ian Fleming hymned the high life of northern France in *Casino Royale*. Now comes word that 007 may be assigned to the Croatian city of Dubrovnik for his next screen mission. "Negotiations about money are going on, and it's not easy to negotiate with James Bond, but we have started," says mayor Andro Vlahušic, blowing his cover like an amateur. Dubrovnik's no stranger to blockbuster backdrops: it's a regular location for *Game Of Thrones* and will be seen in *Star Wars Episode XIII*. Associate producer ***Gregg Wilson*** says "we've just begun to doodle with ideas for the next movie. Each script process begins when we ask ourselves the question, 'What is the world afraid of now?" So that's *Trumperball*, *From Russia With Trump* or *Donald Is Not Enough*, then...

REX (1)

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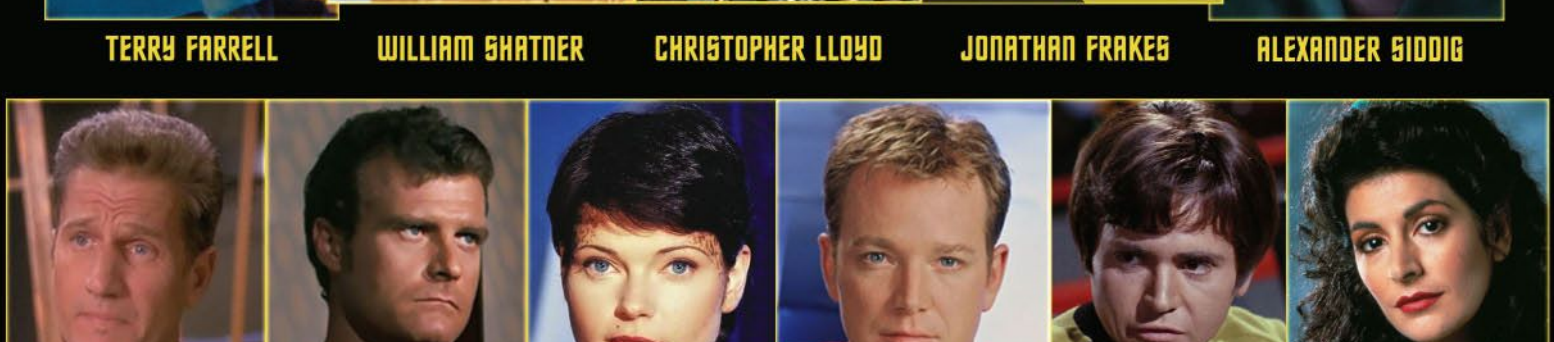
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media 10

SFX HAILING FREQUENCIES OPEN!

First Contact



THIS MONTH'S COMMUNICATIONS MONITOR

IAN BERRIMAN, REVIEWS EDITOR



This month it's been a case of "Let's talk about X, baby", thanks to the return of Mulder and Scully. But you've also been preoccupied with all things superhero, be it the Merc with a Mouth's movie or the latest Marvel TV news. A fair few of you are still writing in about *The Force Awakens* too – clearly there are some *very* slow typists out there... Guys! Time to move on! Got anything else you'd like to get off your chest (or just want to tell us how amazing we are)? Then be sure to get in touch! Contact points are listed opposite.

SFX Hot Topic

Your views on the month's big issue

#THE X-FILES

Adam Harvey, GamesRadar+ The first two episodes of the *X-Files* revival were soooo dull. Retconning the original mythology to fit 2016 felt like a complete cop-out. David Duchovny *still* can't act, and Gillian Anderson looks bored with the appalling dialogue.

Neil Hickman, email After nine series and a movie (the first one that is) I'm pretty sure the aliens were real, even if Mulder isn't. It felt very strange to be giving Truthers a little validation too.

Kaija Blue Sky, Twitter I think *The X-Files* has grown up. It's trying to be more realistic and represents more of the values of our time.

SFX *Hmm, I'm guessing Kaija wrote that before seeing episode three...*

h1tman007mcr, GamesRadar+ I really enjoyed the first and second episodes. The third was absolutely ridiculous.

Eduard Korhonen, Facebook I started to watch the first episode, got bored and drifted out, and never bothered with the rest.

Keith Tudor, email I found the first episode slow, but the second episode had some great dramatic moments, and we then had one of the funniest episodes in *The X-Files*' history – the Were-Monster was a great spin on a classic theme.

Eloxia, Facebook I think a lot of people have nostalgia syndrome – the acting was terrible back in the day, worse than soap opera acting. I'm especially impressed with the improvement Gillian Anderson has made over the years.

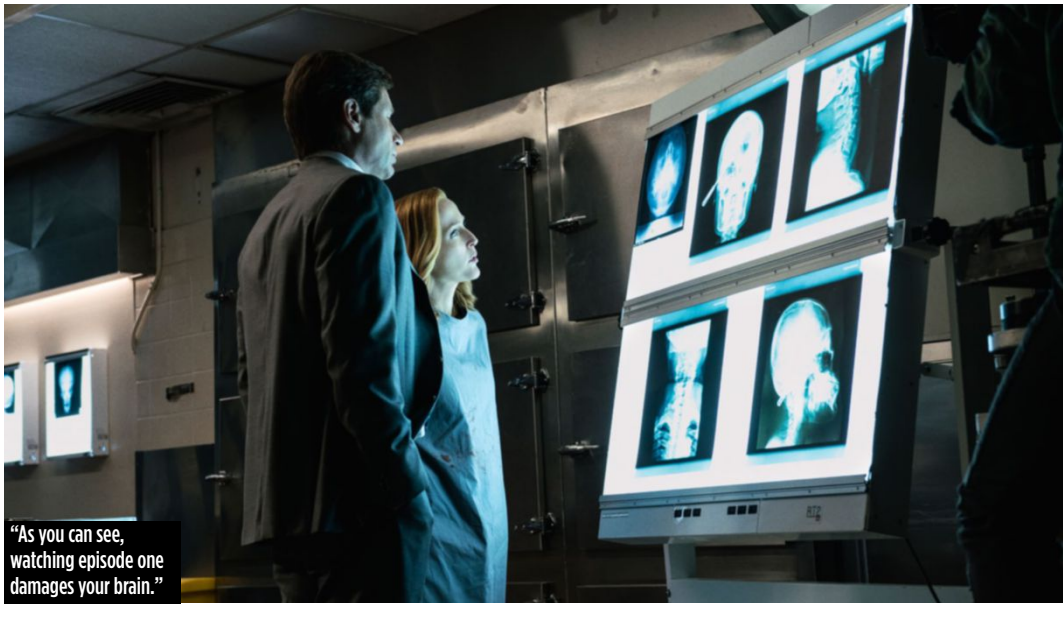
Mark Crawley, Twitter Get two new leads – Scully and Mulder look old and knackered.

SFX *Charming, Mark! And if you think Gillian Anderson looks "knackered", god help the rest of us; you'd think she'd been in cryogenic suspension since 2002.*

Pete Woolman, GamesRadar+ The series has been such a mixed bag. On the one hand "Mulder And Scully Meet The Were-Monster" is up there with the best episodes; but "Babylon" was so misjudged that it almost ruined the entire revival.

Michelle Ferry, Facebook It's refreshing to see a show that's come back acknowledge that yes, time has gone by, and they're not the exact same people they were when the show stopped in the early '00s.

SFX *They're not the only ones who've changed, Michelle. I was replaced by an alien shapeshifter in 2011, for example.*



"As you can see, watching episode one damages your brain."

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> I started to watch the first episode, got bored and drifted out

Gaspar Garção, GamesRadar+ The conspiracy "turned on its head" (ie alien technology used by the military-industrial complex for controlling the population, not an alien invasion), is a strong concept, but I'd prefer the conspiracy plot to stay unresolved; for me, *The X-Files* is about the journey, not the conclusion. Definitely worth another series.

MediumAtomicWeight, GamesRadar+ By 2002 I thought the show had definitely run its course. How wrong! A decade later and the conspiracy theories have become reality – our privacy eroded, surveillance by the state the status quo. *The X-Files* feels more necessary than before.

PeterParker83 I was both excited and worried about the revival. And I was right to be, on both counts, because it's been such a mixed bag.

Rob Horrocks, Twitter It's been a return to the glory days of the show, and I'd love to see more.

SFX *Not sure I agree with the first half of that, but I definitely agree with the conclusion. Head to page 122 to read my verdict on the season!*

Look out for the next SFX Hot Topic at bit.ly/SFXHotTopic



All fine except the pants.



Get reloading for that sequel, Mr Deadpool.

#DEAD GOOD

Mike Garner, email *Deadpool* is easily one of the best Marvel films. It's pitch perfect! Ryan Reynolds is the best casting since Robert Downey Jr put on his Iron Man suit. The writer should receive serious accolades – although they won't, because it's wee and fart jokes. It also has *the* funniest minute of any film, ever, a scene that has to be this generation's Black Knight from *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* – I laughed so hard I peed slightly.

SFX *If any PR people for Marvel are reading, there's your quote for the DVD cover.*

#DEFENDERS ATTACKED

Craig Waterworth, email As a long-time Defenders fan I hoped that one day I'd get to see Dr Strange, Silver Surfer, the Hulk and Namor do battle with the cosmic and the bizarre in their uniquely dysfunctional way. It would have been fantastic to see this bunch of heavy-hitters bickering and bantering their way towards saving the world in an anti-Avengers style. The Defenders are also defined by the fact that though they've had more line-ups than a '70s police station, the central core of team members has always been the foundation.

I nearly fell off my seat when I heard Netflix were taking this on as a TV show; then sinking disappointment set in as I read the line-up: Daredevil, Iron Fist, Luke Cage and Jessica Jones. To the best of my knowledge, Jessica Jones has never been a Defender, and the other three have only been part-time members at best. Marvel/Netflix are doing the franchise a great disservice by ignoring the Defenders' founders. It smacks of "let's use the characters with the cheapest visual effects to get an Avengers-lite TV cash-in". Not good!

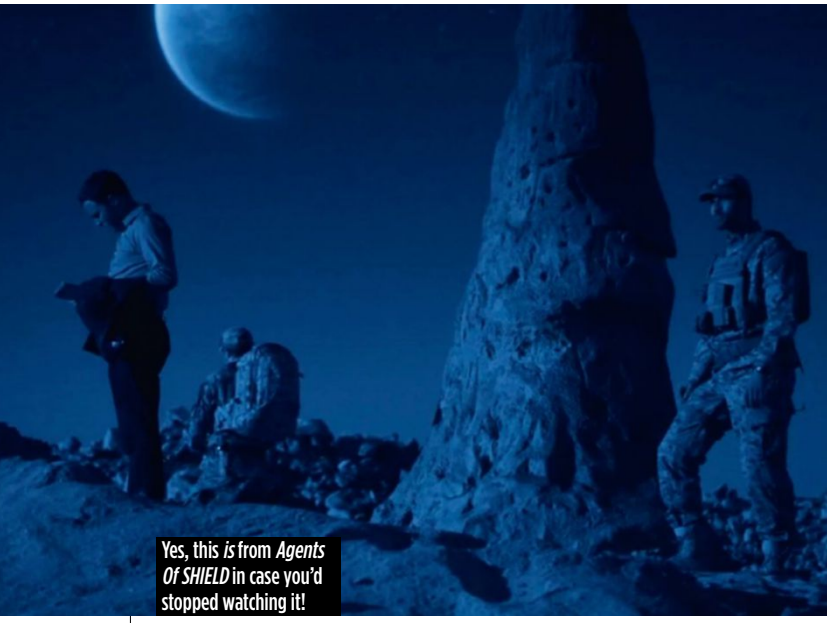
SFX *Cheer up Craig, it could be worse – it could feature Forbush Man, Squirrel Girl and Bessie the Hellcow.*

#REASONS TO FEAR CHIBNALL, PART THREE

The Llama God, email So, Chris Chibnall's taking over *Doctor Who*. And there's plenty of reasons to be worried. Yes, *Broadchurch* was superb, but let's not forget *Torchwood* series one and two, and the assumption that people are incapable of growing or changing after a decade of experience...

When Russell T Davies took charge of *Who*, he brought in his insidious "gay agenda". Steven Moffat brought in his married →

First Contact



Yes, this *is* from *Agents Of SHIELD* in case you'd stopped watching it!

person/mediocre story/too-busy-doing-*Sherlock*/not-doing-things-exactly-the-way-fans-wanted agenda. What, we have to ask, is Chibnall's agenda?

We don't know! Which is distressing. As a *Doctor Who* fan I need to know what it is we're railing against week on week. And right now I don't! I hate it already!

Change, my dear... I don't like it.

SFX ***Chill out Who fans! "Dinosaurs On A Spaceship" was great fun! And "Cyberwoman" was... er... well... let's just move on to the next letter, shall we?***

#BOWIE BALLS-UP

John Kirtley, Newcastle Your "Bowie Tribute" in issue 271 is just so offensive. First you choose the only bad picture of the man ever taken, and once you read the copy you see that it was meant to be an awful picture of a shocked/gurning Bowie. Then the last line [about his role in *Labyrinth*] reads, "complete with fright wig and giant codpiece". Really! After a lifetime of creative exploration and artistic bravery.

To end this trite and dismissive article with an inaccurate description of his crotch (it wasn't a codpiece, just an adult male penis and testicles seen briefly in his dance tights in a few full-length shots) is offensive and lacking in respect.



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SFX ***News editor Will replies: Sorry you didn't like the tribute. I'm well aware of Bowie's legacy, having been a fan since I was six (now 35). I was devastated by the news of his death. One thing that Bowie never was, however, was po-faced. He was well-aware of how his crotch (you're right – codpiece was an error on my part) had become a talking point since Labyrinth was released, and I'm certain it bothered him not a jot.***

#WE ALSO HEARD FROM

James Kinsley, Norwich As someone who's stuck with the middling, bumbling adventures of those *Agents Of SHIELD*, I was astounded to suddenly be rewarded with one of the most absorbing and enjoyable hours of genre TV in years: the alien planet-based Jemma Simmons episode "4,722 Hours". Utterly brilliant! It felt like a self-contained movie.

SFX ***Agreed. Definitely one of the most memorable episodes, just because it was so different.***

> "We need to know what we're railing against week on week"

Jon Bower, email Syfy US managing to commission and air a decent, high-budget, modern SF series is about as rare as Millwall beating Barcelona. But *The Expanse* seems to be different. So, one may reasonably ask, might we get to see it Blighty? Don't ask me. I wrote to Syfy US and they didn't bother to respond. So, we're all in the dark. Meanwhile, we can all feast instead on such gems as *Zombies Vs Strippers* and *Three-Headed Shark Attack*. Bliss.

SFX ***We asked Syfy UK but unfortunately they're not able to confirm anything at this time. Fingers crossed!***

David Cookson, email Thanks for your Time Machine feature on *Starcrash* in *SFX* 271! I'd love to see a feature on the 1981 film *Condorman*. And if you're feeling particularly bold, how about one on *The Return Of Captain Invincible* (1983), another guilty pleasure of mine – especially the bit where Alan Arkin and Christopher Lee sing a duet!

SFX ***You're clearly a connoisseur of classic cinema, David. Any more requests, people?***

Mike Poole, Bexhill-on-Sea I have one enormous problem with John Constantine on TV. Didn't like his solo series, and his guest appearance in *Arrow* was no better. It's not his lack of charisma, the needlessly vague details on his abilities, or his seeming lack of interest. It's his bloody tie.

Why does he wear an undone tie? Having a sagging tie like that makes it look like you had a few too many at lunchtime. But it's clearly been deliberately tied to be like that, as it'd never reach his trousers if he did it up properly. The man is a sartorial disgrace!

SFX ***Mike, don't ever watch Columbo – it'd be very bad for your blood pressure.***

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DOCTOR WHO SERIES 10

Wishlist
WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE IN UPCOMING MOVIES AND TV

It's Steven Moffat's last year as showrunner – and there's a new companion on the way...

Illustration by Paul Garner

YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

HEY, BBC! TAKE NOTE OF OUR READERS' OPINIONS OR WE'LL REVERSE THE POLARITY OF YOUR NEUTRON FLOW!

MORE DOCTOR DRAMA

1 You're keen that the star of the show has some juicy material to play, building on those electrifyingly dramatic moments in series nine. "I'd like to see the character evolution of Capaldi's Doctor continue, with more standout moments like his speech in the Zygon episode," says **Michael Lupton**. **Fred Harrison**, meanwhile, has a zero tolerance approach when it comes to Twelve's midlife crisis: "No sonic glasses, no guitar."

A SENSE OF HISTORY

2 It's the crucial question – who'll be sharing the Doctor's travels now Clara is gone? "Gemma Arterton would be brilliant," claims **Lizzie Woods**, "especially if she plays someone from the '40s and has a cool vintage look like Agent Carter."

MONSTER MASHING

3 You're not short of suggestions when it comes to the fiendish creatures the Doctor should face. "I'd love the Sea Devils to make a return," says **Josh Pinder**. "And as it's Moff's final run of episodes I'd love the Vashta Nerada back." **Mike Copping**, meanwhile, calls for the comeback of a foe not seen since the days of William Hartnell: "Mechanoids!"

TIME LORDING IT

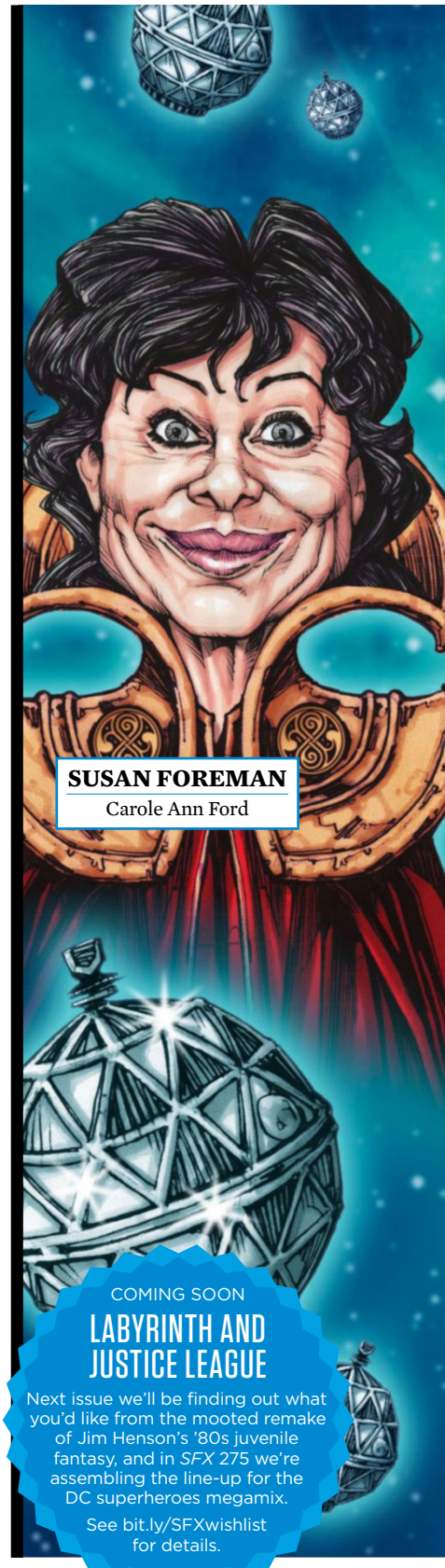
4 The long-awaited return of the Doctor's people in series nine has clearly fired up your imagination circuits. **Andrew Bardsley** wants "a return to Gallifrey to put right past wrongs, including a brush with a previous Master – maybe John Simm?" **Robert William Graham** prefers a fresh Gallifreyan foe: "A brand new evil Time Lord villain now that the Time Lords are back."

THE THREE-ISH DOCTORS

5 You want multiple Doctors in Moffat's swan song series, you greedy lot. "Bring in Sean Pertwee for a cameo as his father's Doctor," suggests **John Frahm**, while **Jenny Hope** wants "Matt Smith. I'm a 50-year-old housewife – and I want Matt back."

And that's not all they want...

→ **Doug Browning** Daleks!
→ **Sharrel Wright** Give those angry pepperpots a rest. I love the Daleks but they need a little break.
→ **Allison Grahan** Peter Capaldi's Doctor is cool. Please don't try to change him.
→ **Jodie Portugal** Clive Langer from *The Sarah Jane Adventures* to become a companion.
→ **Rhys Captain Hale** Companions to actually travel in the TARDIS, rather than being picked up whenever the Doctor feels like it.
→ **Richard Swindon Grace** Joanna Lumley as the Doctor, please.
→ **Mike Morgan** Every two-part script that is commissioned must be written as a three-parter and then ruthlessly trimmed down, so that what's left is substantial enough to justify two episodes.
→ **Katherine Randazzo** More Twelfth Doctor hugs. We always need more Twelfth Doctor hugs!
→ **Becky** Catherine Tate to be a permanent companion.
→ **Jeremy Mathias** Let's see the Doctor catch up with a previous companion. Peter Capaldi and Janet "Tegan" Fielding would be an explosive combination!
→ **Andy Lines** It needs refreshing as the last series was a little dull. Even the interesting storylines had some dodgy pay-offs.
→ **David Yates** More than one companion. The Davison era had as many as three at the same time.
→ **Kevin Breen** Jenny. She's got planets to save, civilisations to rescue, creatures to defeat and an awful lot of running to do.
→ **Sarah Norton** A full-on invasion of Earth story.
→ **Chris Warwick** Darker, edgier, playing to Capaldi's strengths. Hiding behind the sofa, peeping through fingers moments.
→ **Les Dinerstein** The return of Susan, the Doctor's granddaughter.
→ **Gillian Pearce** A 2016 air date.
→ **Blue_eyed_neko** I want the next season not to be Capaldi's last one.
→ **Gray H** A new Doctor.
→ **Robert Clarkson** Susan Foreman! It's got to be Susan Foreman!
→ **Ant O'B** Cancellation.
→ **John Wade** Sonic jockstrap.
→ **Mark Eastham** Deadpool in it.



SUSAN FOREMAN
Carole Ann Ford

COMING SOON
LABYRINTH AND JUSTICE LEAGUE
Next issue we'll be finding out what you'd like from the mooted remake of Jim Henson's '80s juvenile fantasy, and in *SFX* 275 we're assembling the line-up for the DC superheroes megamix.
See bit.ly/SFXwishlist for details.

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YOUR DREAM CAST



125

JACK OF SHADOWS

by Roger Zelazny, 1971

Mike Carey on one of the first novels to merge SF and fantasy



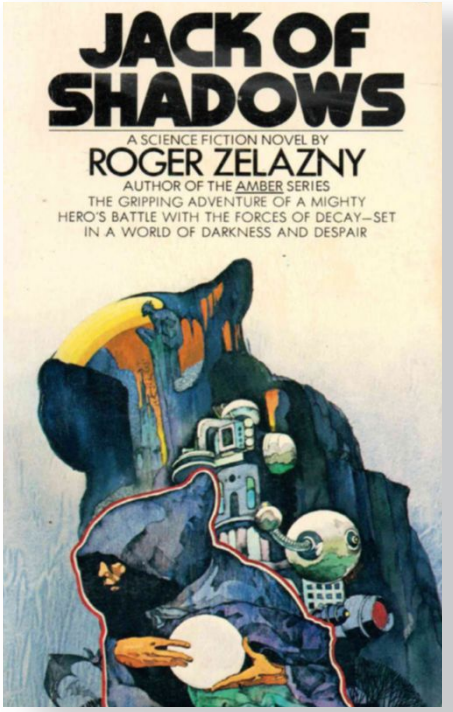
Roger Zelazny's place in the history of science fiction and fantasy is assured – in the case of sci-fi by *Lord Of Light* and as far as fantasy is concerned by the *Amber* novels, beginning with *Nine Princes In Amber* in 1970 and concluding more than two decades later with *Prince Of Chaos*.

But in critical explorations of the Zelazny opus, *Jack Of Shadows* sometimes fails to get a mention, or else it's dismissed as a flawed or lesser work. On its initial release Lester Del Rey called it "minor Zelazny" and drew attention to its serial origins, suggesting that the author had failed to fuse the separate parts of his story into a coherent whole.

I hate to pick a fight with an editor of Del Rey's stature, but I think the genius and the uniqueness of *Jack Of Shadows* lie precisely in the fact that it is made of pieces – by which I mean genre tropes – that can't be made to fit snugly together.

The world of the novel does not rotate in relation to its sun. One hemisphere is perpetually in daylight, the other endures perpetual night. In between is a negotiable area known as the Twilight Lands. The daysiders cleave to science. The nightsiders use magic. And – very literally – never the twain shall meet. There are strict limits on the commerce and intercourse between the two societies. They barely acknowledge each other's existence and they police their borders with manic vigilance.

The eponymous Jack is a nightsider, and a thief. An attempted heist early on in the novel puts him on the wrong side of a great many powerful entities, on whom he swears revenge. But in order to make good on his oath he needs



a magical artefact – Kolwynia, the Key That Was Lost – and he undertakes a quest to find it.

So far, so high fantasy. But Jack's quest for Kolwynia doesn't follow a traditional form. Rather than consulting oracles, assembling fellowships, venturing into caves and all that palaver, Jack goes across into the dayside and takes advantage of its super-advanced IT. He uses a room-sized computer (1970s, remember) to define and retrieve Kolwynia – in fact, to recreate it digitally.

So having started in a more or less familiar fantasy setting, the book jumps sideways and takes us to a world that's very much like our own. Then it uses the tensions between the two societies to explore the ways in which our beliefs shape our world and define our limits. It's an incredibly assured genre mash-up – one of the first – and it makes the clash of genres into an exquisite meditation on systems of thought, on science and mythology and religion.

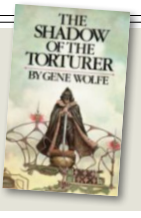
At one point Jack discusses the nature of reality with a sphinx-like immortal, Morningstar. He points out that where the nightsiders believe there is a machine at the core of the world (broken, which is why the world doesn't move) the daysiders believe there's a sleeping demon. He asks Morningstar which view is correct. Morningstar says that each society colours reality in keeping with its own belief. And what colour are they using here, Jack demands? "Incomprehensible."

I also love the book for its equivocal (anti-) hero and its insanely ambiguous ending. Jack's quest is only the first stage in a journey that's more and more inward and introspective – but ends up changing his world irrevocably. Nothing is resolved, everything is thrown into turmoil, and yet for me it's one of the most satisfying reads in all Zelazny's work.

MR Carey's latest novel, Fellside, is published by Orbit on 7 April, and reviewed on p112. The Girl With All The Gifts is out now.

Like this? Try these!

THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER
***by* GENE WOLFE (1980)**
→ **A disgraced torturer, Severian, wanders a far-future Earth that has forgotten its past and then reinvented it as legend.**



PERDIDO STREET STATION
***by* CHINA MIÉVILLE (2000)**
→ **In the city of New Crobuzon a technological breakthrough threatens the social order and brings dire consequences for its inventor. One of Miéville's *Bas-Lag* novels.**

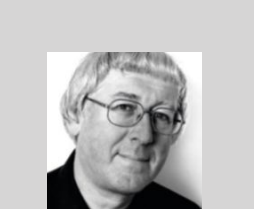


NEXT ISSUE

Our next Book Club outing (in *SFX* 274, on sale 27 April), sees Seanan McGuire, who also writes under the pseudonym Mira Grant, talking about Stephen King's 1986 doorstopper *It*. If you've never read it – or just fancy giving it another go – now's the time to do so before a top writer gives her opinion.

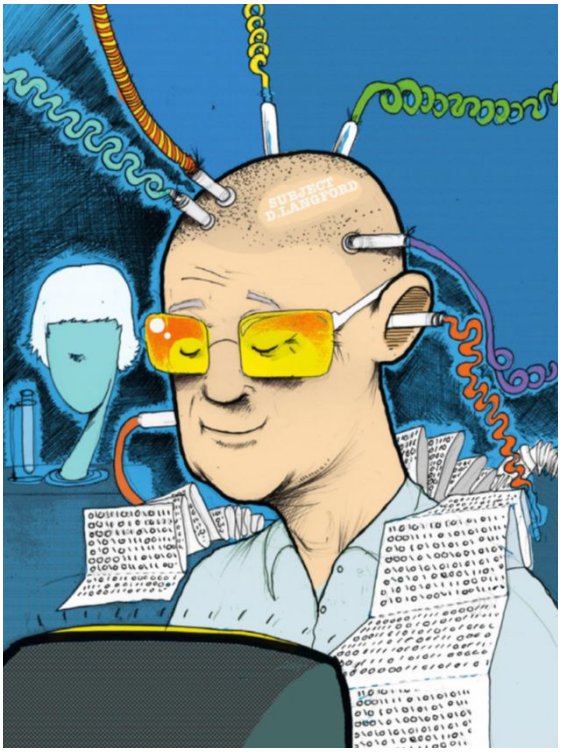



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BALDERDASH

David Langford reveals the bare facts



"FORTUNATELY SOME BALD CHAPS ARE ON THE SIDE OF ANGELS, LIKE PROFESSOR X"

→ *Illustration by Andy Watt*

Not a lot of people know that Hugo Gernsback, the SF magazine pioneer after whom the Nebula Award isn't named, liked to publish spoofs of glossy US journals as substitute Xmas cards. His 1945 effort, copying the design of *Time* magazine but called *Tame*, was dated Christmas 2045 and reviewed the first century of the Atomic Age.

In this 2045, maybe thanks to a long history of radioactive fallout, normal Earthlings are bald and an actress with hair is promoted as a weird throwback. *Tame*'s cover shows a bald secretary thinking correspondence into her "mindwriter" machine...

Did this inspire Arthur C Clarke's *3001: The Final Odyssey*, in which baldness is among the bare necessities for working with future technology? Hair gets in the way of the Braincap interface that lets you use Clarke's amazing Thoughtwriter and (unless you have huge powers of concentration) send messages full of asides like "Sorry again – trouble with Thoughtwriters – hard to stick to point –"

HG Wells made his baldy prediction long before Clarke or Gernsback, in the 1893 essay "The Man Of The Year Million". This scientifically imagines Future Us as big-brained and big-eyed, with shrunken body and limbs overshadowed by that mighty hairless intellect. Wells's own Martians in *War Of The Worlds* are like this only more so, and the tradition carries on to other bad baldies such as the Mekon.

In comics, another famously wicked bone-dome is Superman's nemesis Lex Luthor, whose entire life was warped by premature hair loss. His vaunted scientific genius is somehow unable to come up with the kind of solution imaginable even to the rudimentary mind of Donald Trump.

Fortunately some bald chaps are on the side of the angels, like Professor Xavier of the X-Men and Captain Picard of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Not to mention most of the psi-powered Baldies in *Mutant* (1953) by Henry Kuttner and CL Moore, where those gifted with the power of telepathy are marked from childhood with hairless pates so ordinary folk can persecute them. Perhaps the furious mental activity of thought-transfer fries your follicles.

All this brings us to the terrifying real-life prediction made by US psychic The Amazing Criswell, who played himself in the legendary *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. His "sensational bestseller" *Criswell Predicts* offers a definitive scenario for the future, including: "I predict one of the most horrifying things to befall any woman. I regret to predict that women will lose their hair. I predict that scientists will try to prove that the cause of this falling out of the hair is due to the gaseous fumes polluting the city's air." Foolish scientists.

Yes, apocalypse looms in St Louis, Missouri, with "law suits, divorces, murders, desertions and even massacres ... male hairdressers will be murdered ... beauticians will be beaten, slashed and shot. Divorce courts will be swamped with irate husbands seeking freedom from their bald-headed wives." Surely not if they look anything like the shaven ladies in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Persis Khambatta) or *Dune* (Francesca Annis).

Fortunately Criswell calculates that after three grim months, "new hair will be grown as mysteriously as it disappeared." When will this horror begin? The scheduled date of our psychic's infallible 1968 prophecy is, er, February 1983. ◕

David Langford wishes his wife wouldn't say "getting a bit thin on top, dear".

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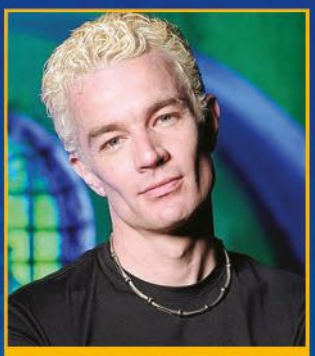
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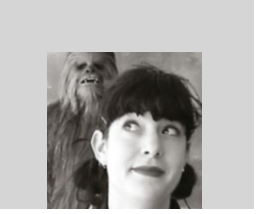
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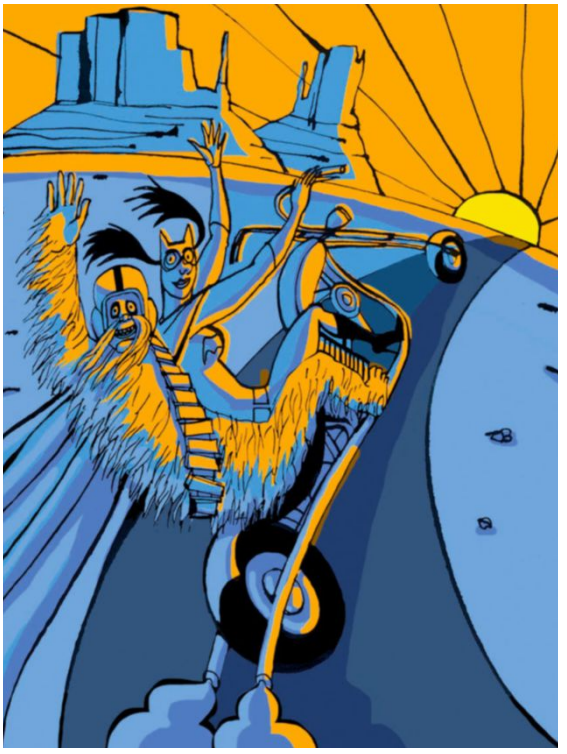
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GO FORTH AND CREATE

Got an idea? Don't let inertia stop you, says ***Bonnie Burton***



"DON'T YOU DARE LET ANYONE TELL YOU THAT YOUR DREAMS ARE UNATTAINABLE"

→ *Illustration by Maria Colino*

Over the years in my column for *SFX* magazine, I've written on everything from Klingon romance techniques to surviving alien viruses. I've revealed my love for robot dogs and cyborg men. I've even defended the *Star Wars Holiday Special* when many fans of a galaxy far, far away would rather pretend it never existed.

I've asked fanboys – multiple times – to stop giving girls like me a hard time for liking all things geeky. And I've demanded that filmmakers give us more female-led sci-fi, fantasy and superhero films. Heck, I even stood up for Lucifer. It's been good fun thinking of bizarre topics to write about month to month to entertain you all. But sadly, this is my last column for *SFX*.

Instead of making this a glum last hurrah, I wanted to dedicate this space to a simple message of encouragement that I hope you will all take to heart. My request is that you all go out there and make something great. Whether you're an artist, writer, director, actor, game maker, dancer, crafter – wherever your passion lies, develop it more and do something with it.

Can't stand watching TV programmes and movies when you know you could make something better? Then do it! More and more budding filmmakers are creating quality entertainment on YouTube and Vimeo. If you want to have a bigger budget, skip the traditional route of going through large studios and use crowdsourcing instead to fund your film or web series.

If you have an outline for a screenplay, sit down and write it out. It doesn't have to be perfect. Just finish writing the whole thing, then edit it with a critical eye later. This also goes for that half-finished novel tucked away inside your desk.

The best part of all this is that you don't have to wait for someone to give you permission to do it. You don't need fancy equipment, or a lot of money, or even approval from your peers. As long as you have the desire and the dedication to put into your project, anything is possible.

And don't you dare let anyone tell you that your dreams are unattainable. If I listened to every person who told me I would never publish bestselling books, host art shows, write for magazines, guest star in TV programmes and films, or have my own web series, then I'd be one boring girl. Instead, I followed my own path and ignored the haters. Plus I continually experiment. After mastering the art of making Jabba the Hutt body pillows, I wanted to challenge myself by building my own replica of a WWII Enigma machine. While I co-host a comedy YouTube series called "Vaginal Fantasy Romance Book Club", I am teaching myself video editing and animation skills so I can make even more shows where I call the shots. I've always wanted to script a videogame, so that's up next. Not to mention dabbling in writing a musical about the infamous HP Lovecraft monster Cthulhu.

My point is that you should never limit your artistic endeavours. Always explore the world around you, and remain keen to build an even better universe.

While this column has been a blast to write, I'm excited to see what's next. Whether I continue to write quirky craft books, pen mind-bending movie scripts, or develop a new style of storytelling altogether, I know I'm going to have fun doing it. And so should you. I can't wait to see what you all create – and remember to thank me in all your awards speeches. ●

Bonnie is currently waving a big bye-bye at you all.

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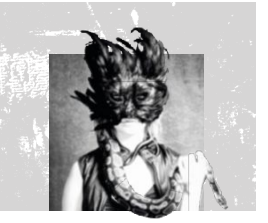
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Monsters come in many forms and things are not what they seem...

VIOLENCE IS THE ANSWER

In 2008 Pascal Laugier's transcendent torture-porn ***Martyrs*** hit the pinnacle of the New French Extremism movement and became a cult classic. Those who haven't seen it – avert your eyes! It's a film of two halves, the first being the escape and slow rehabilitation of a girl held captive and traumatised as a child, the second her demise and her friend's subsequent incarceration and drawn-out torture by a cult. It's an ordeal, but it has something to say. April finally sees the US remake hit screens and it seems to have missed the point, smoothing the rough, polishing the surfaces, streamlining the torture and empowering the girls in a way that disempowers the film. Sometimes by making a film less horrible it becomes cheaper and nastier. Three more remakes guilty of the same: *The Last House On The Left*, *I Spit On Your Grave* and *Funny Games US*. In *Last House* making the parents young, beautiful and strong turns this into bog-standard revenge; the tricks, traps and gags of *I Spit* cheapen the rape entirely, and the recasting of *Funny Games* with Naomi Watts and Tim Roth turns an intelligent dialectic into a patronising scolding. Disturbing doesn't always have to be entertaining.

A STAB IN THE DARK

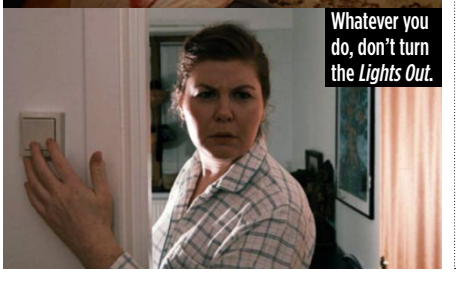
The best thing I've seen this month is only two minutes and 42 seconds long. ***Lights Out*** is a low-budget, no-dialogue short from 2013 that I've just stumbled on since the feature-length version is heading to the big screen in August from Warner. Made by short-filmmaker David Sandberg, who'll make his feature debut with the full-length version, it's genius – a woman in her house flicking the light on and off, and seeing the shadow of a creature only visible in the dark. Google this now! How on earth this could possibly work as a feature I have no idea – chances are, like *Mama*, which also began as a brilliant short, it won't, but Sandberg could well be the Next Big Thing. Meanwhile *Mama* man Andrés Muschietti has signed on to direct one of my favourite books of recent years, ***Birdbox***, about a post-apocalypse world terrorised by monsters so frightening you die if you look at them. Challenging.



We think he's learned *The Lesson*.



Getting to know the carpet in *Martyrs*.



Whatever you do, don't turn the *Lights Out*.

TEACHER'S PETS

Another interesting feature debut: low-budget indie ***The Lesson***, written and directed by British former actress Ruth Platt. Described as "*Grange Hill* meets *Saw*" it's actually more sophisticated than that – a discursive examination of the ethics of human nature: are we born evil? Do we need rule and order to stop us acting like beasts? And, um, is that kind of a male thing? It's *Eden Lake* with compassion, *Bully* with philosophy, Professor Snape with a nail gun... Interesting then, although it's a victim of its own methods – I finished the film knowing quite a lot about Thomas Hobbs and Jean-Jacques Rousseau but not feeling particularly disturbed or thrilled. Platt's one to watch though – check out the film via FrightFest Presents.

BIGGIE SMALL

You know, like, when parents hide vegetables in pizza to make kids eat something healthy by accident? Don't watch the trailer, don't listen to the hype, but do take everyone you know to see ***10 Cloverfield Lane***. Shhh, don't tell, but it's actually a proper horror film – and stealth horror at its finest! A tense, terrifying, theatrical three-hander dressed like a blockbuster, it's going to make lots of people cross by virtue of not being *Independence Day*, but I *loved* it. So JJ Abrams I salute you, for subtly and insidiously sneaking a wonderful horror movie into the diets of millions of sceptical cinemagoers without them knowing any better.

Dreadful Old Movie

Much-mocked misogynistic mayhem returns with 1960s B-movie *The Leech Woman*, out 23 May. Made for cheap to play as a double-bill with *The Brides Of Dracula* it sees an unhappy wife steal a magic ring which, with the help of male hormones, keeps her eternally youthful and able to pull her choice of chaps half her age. The minx!



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FREESPEAK

WHERE WRITERS AND OPINIONS COLLIDE

Author *Lucy Hounsom* loves the diversity in RPGs



've clocked up over 1,000 hours on the *Dragon Age* games, around 650 on *Skyrim* and countless more on *Morrowind* and *Oblivion*. Why? Because I love stealing stuff.

Okay, there are also fantastic quests, fascinating characters, beautiful landscapes and, most importantly, diversity.

We talk about the need for diversity in books, especially genre fiction, but these RPGs have been ahead of the game (excuse the pun) for years. Diversity is a vast term, covering all manner of social, religious and political behaviours. It's about racial representation, sexual freedom and being given the chance to choose our own paths.

RPGs like *Skyrim* and *Dragon Age* allow you to customise your character, everything from race and gender to skin colour and skill sets. No one is being forced to empathise with a protagonist modelled on someone else's worldview. You don't even have to be a hero. Your means and methods are your own.

Relationships are a big part of *Dragon Age* and aren't restricted to conventional models. The latest game, *Inquisition*, discusses homosexual and transgender characters in a refreshingly modern way, giving the player a chance to interact with these individuals and their storylines. There aren't many epic fantasy novels that offer the same breadth of experience – perhaps because they're chiefly constructed by a single person rather than a team of creatives, each of whom brings their unique perspective to the creative process.

A diverse world is a realistic world and the realms of Thedas and Tamriel necessarily come with their own sets of prejudices. Walk into the Winter Palace in Orlais as an elf or mage and, despite your status as Inquisitor, you'll receive a chilly welcome. Play as commoner or noble and society judges you accordingly.

We shouldn't underplay the ability of RPGs to reflect the inequalities of the real world, while simultaneously bringing positive examples of diversity to a wider audience.

And for allowing me, incorrigible thief, to indulge my habit without getting arrested.

Starborn, the first in Lucy's Worldmaker trilogy, is out now.

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Future Publishing Ltd Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA
Email sfx@futurenet.com **Web** www.gamesradar.com/sfx

EDITORIAL

Editor Richard Edwards, richard.edwards@futurenet.com
Art Editor Jonathan Coates, jonathan.coates@futurenet.com
Deputy Art Editor Catherine Kirkpatrick, catherine.kirkpatrick@futurenet.com
Production Editor Russell Lewin, russell.lewin@futurenet.com
Features Editor Nick Setchfield, nick.setchfield@futurenet.com
Reviews Editor Ian Berriman, ian.berriman@futurenet.com
Acting News Editor Will Salmon, william.salmon@futurenet.com
US Editor (East Coast) Tara Bennett, usaeast@sfx.co.uk
US Editor (West Coast) Joseph McCabe, usawest@sfx.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS

Sam Ashurst, David Barnett, Saxon Bullock, Bonnie Burton, Bryan Cairns, Mike Carey, Matthew Castle, Paul Cemmick, Nick Chen, Maria Colino, Simon Cooper, Sarah Dobbs, Penny Dreadful, Rhian Drinkwater, Paul Garner, Dave Golder, David N Grove, Guy Haley, Kevin Harley, Stephen Jewell, Paul Kirkley, David Langford, Jayne Nelson, James Nouch, Andrew Osmond, Jem Roberts, Eddie Robson, Bridie Roman, Andy Watt, David West, James White, Benji Wilson, Jonathan Wright

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ADVERTISING

Commercial Sales Director Clare Dove, clare.dove@futurenet.com
Advertising Director Andrew Church, andrew.church@futurenet.com
Advertising Manager Michael Pyatt, michael.pyatt@futurenet.com
Account Director Adrian Hill, 01225 442244, adrian.hill@futurenet.com
For advertising queries, please contact Adrian Hill, 01225 442244

MARKETING

Head Of Brand Marketing and Newstrade Laura Driffield, laura.driffield@futurenet.com
Marketing Manager Kristianne Stanton, kristianne.stanton@futurenet.com
Marketing Executive Emma Clapp, emma.clapp@futurenet.com

PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Production Controller Frances Twentyman, frances.twentyman@futurenet.com
Production Manager Mark Constance, mark.constance@futurenet.com
Printed in the UK by William Gibbons & Sons on behalf of Future
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT **Tel** 020 7429 4000
Overseas distribution by Seymour International

CIRCULATION

Trade Marketing Manager Michelle Brock, 020 7429 3683, michelle.brock@seymour.co.uk

LICENSING

International Director Matt Ellis, matt.ellis@futurenet.com
Tel +44 (0)1225 442244

THE SENIOR PARTNERS

Group Art Director Graham Dalzell
Editorial Director Paul Newman
Managing Director, Magazines Division Joe McEvoy

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"You'd know if you'd lost your foot, wouldn't you?"

Worlds Of SFX

There's a whole universe to explore beyond this magazine



THIS MONTH ON gamesradar+

Find out what's going on here on our website!



Five things to look out for on our massive entertainment portal at gamesradar.com/sfx

1. The new season of *Game Of Thrones* is just around the corner, but if you're desperately trying to remember what everyone was up to last time you saw them, here's seasons one to five in under nine minutes. **http://bit.ly/SFXThronesVideo**

2. The Merc with a Mouth wowed fans and newbies alike with his origins movie, but did you catch all the Easter Eggs? Here's every silly secret joke hidden in *Deadpool*. **http://bit.ly/SFXDeadpoolEggs**

3. It's not long till Duncan Jones's *Warcraft* movie is out, but if you know shamefully little about the videogame adaptation, we're here to help. **http://bit.ly/SFXWarcraft**

4. We might have a long time to wait for *Star Wars VIII*, but there's one thing we do know – the cast. Check out everything on the returning and new characters for *The Force Awakens* sequel. **http://bit.ly/SFXStarWars8**

5. Unless you've been living under a rock you must have seen the full-length trailer for the new *Ghostbusters* movie by now. Here's one fan who's hopeful the film will nail the true spirit of the original. **http://bit.ly/SFXGhostbusters**

Magazines & Beyond

SFX ON THE RADIO!



→ **The world's number one sci-fi and fantasy magazine – that's us – is embarking on an all-new mission in the audio frontier. Each month, *SFX* editor Richard Edwards is being allowed out of the office to take part in the monthly Spoiler Alert podcast on Fubar Radio, joining hosts Claire Lim and Adam Johnson to talk about all things geek. There'll be chat about the hottest sci-fi/fantasy releases and the biggest genre news, interviews, and lots of other fun bits and pieces, all crammed into an action-packed two hours. You can download the Spoiler Alert podcast now at Fubarradio.com.**

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TOTAL FILM



→ **This issue *Total Film* reveals the definitive list of the ten coolest forthcoming movies, headed up by Eddie Redmayne in *Potter* sort-of prequel *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*. They also go in-depth on the likes of *Ghostbusters*, *Assassin's Creed* and *Suicide Squad*, sit down with Stanley Tucci, and have candid chats with Emilia Clarke, Tina Fey and Margot Robbie. Plus bucketloads of reviews of the latest screen and home entertainment releases, and much more. If your newsagent doesn't have it, call them a beast. You'll feel fantastic.**
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FANTASY SPECIAL



→ **"Fantastic!" No, not the Ninth Doctor but our latest bookazine, all about the weird and wonderful world of fantasy, from books to films to everyone's favourite dragon-filled TV show, *Game Of Thrones*. Whatever your flavour of fantasy, you'll find what you're looking for here. The special includes director interviews, episode guides, a tribute to the late, great Terry Pratchett and a tension-filled countdown of the 50 greatest fantasy films of all time. Will your favourite be number one? There's only one way to find out...**
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AVENGERS DI

DIVIDED THEY STAND! AS CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR



SASSEMBLE!

EXPLODES THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE, NICK SETCHFIELD SLINGS THE SHIELD...

There's a faultline in the blockbuster bedrock of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. A fracture that's about to deepen and widen, tearing heroes apart and ideological certainties asunder. It's time to choose teams, people. Time to ask "Whose side are you on?" This is war. And it's going to be emotional...

"Tonally, and from an execution standpoint, this is unlike any Marvel movie we've seen before," promises Joe Russo, co-director of *Captain America: Civil War*. "It's certainly got more edge and, on an emotional level, darker things happen in this movie than people have experienced in other Marvel films."

It's a return to frontline franchise duty for Joe and his brother Anthony. Two years ago the fraternal creative team gave us *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, an adventure that thrust its pure-hearted patriot into the treacherous realm of the contemporary conspiracy thriller.

"That was the most important thing for us in that movie," says Anthony Russo, "figuring out a way to bring Captain America into the modern age. *The First Avenger* introduced Golden Era Cap, the classic, old-school Captain America that everyone knows and loves and associates with the origin of the character. We had to figure out a way to modernise him and make him fully of the moment. All of our stylistic choices flowed from that central idea."

And that, Russo tells *SFX*, is the momentum that brings us to *Civil War*, a film that vows to explore the heart of the man behind the shield.

"What we wanted to do was keep Cap evolving forward as a character," he explains. "Where do you take the world's greatest soldier? Where does that guy's story eventually go? Where does it end? That's what we were thinking about – moving him into places that surprised and excited us and felt like they challenged the character."

The Russos were drafted for *Civil War* on the strength of initial buzz for *The Winter Soldier*, acclaimed for its muscular action sequences and grounded tone. It's a gritty, hard-edged vibe preserved – and expanded upon – in the sequel.

"We've kept it rooted but we wanted to evolve it," Anthony Russo explains. "In our →



The job interview was going well until he asked about the pension plan.



“It’s certainly got more edge, and on an emotional level darker things happen than in other Marvel films”

ALONG CAME A SPIDER

At last, Peter Parker swings into the new Marvel Universe



★ Only recently revealed to the world in a trailer (with fancy, shape-changing eyes!), he's the character in *Civil War* everyone wants to see – a brand new cinematic incarnation of Spider-Man, scuttling into the current MCU for the first time. The Russo brothers shared responsibility for casting a Wall-crawler who could hold his own on-screen against Iron Man, Hulk, Thor and all the other icons in the Marvel roster.

"The daunting aspect is that he was my favourite character when I was a child," says Joe Russo. "And that puts a lot of pressure on you to execute at a level where you'll feel satisfied with what you had in your imagination as an 11-year-old. Remembering what you loved about the character is a great tool to have as a director. So it's important that we have a history with comic books. It informs our interpretation of the characters. We remember what we loved about them as children, and you look at what you like about them now as an adult, and you try and merge those points of view. As I grew older I started to buy darker comic books and liked things that were more intense and had an edge to them, and you marry that to the unbridled joy you had as an 11-year-old, reading a great Spider-Man comic and wanting to be him."

This Spidey is played by Britain's Tom Holland. At 19 he's the youngest actor to slip behind the mask, a choice that skews closer to Stan Lee and Steve Ditko's original conception of a callow high school hero. "We were adamant about casting an actor who was very close in age to the character," says Joe Russo. "For the first time on-screen you'll see that insecurity, but also the fun that comes from having a 15- or 16-year-old character, played by somebody who's very close in age to that, surrounded by really experienced superheroes. It creates a very fun and engaging dynamic."



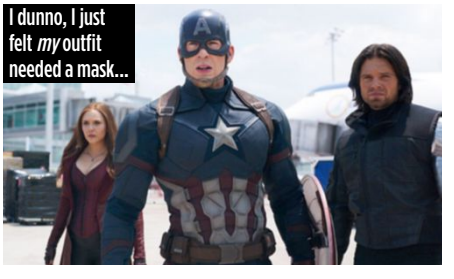
Is wearing your corset on the outside the female version of wearing your undies outside?

own minds we always thought of *The Winter Soldier* as a political thriller. And we think of *Civil War* as a psychological thriller. So they're related in tone and texture but there is a different central dynamic at work."

"We like psychological realism," Joe Russo chips in, adding: "And we run with that as hard as we can."

The third Captain America movie takes its cue – and its title – from Mark Millar and Steve McNiven's 2006 comic book series. While it shares the key concept of a schism in the superpowered ranks of the Marvel pantheon, the Russos tell *SFX* that the film significantly diverges from its source material, shifting the comic's focus on secret identities to broader questions of power and accountability.

"It's a loose adaptation," says Anthony Russo. "It takes the central idea but there's a lot of characters that are involved in the comic book who aren't in the film. And with how the whole story unfolds we kind of modernised it and made it more specific to the MCU.



I dunno, I just felt *my* outfit needed a mask...

"We think of it as a psychological thriller. We like psychological realism. We run with it as hard as we can"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"Civil War is nominally about the idea of superhero registration. It's a political concept. And we love the political, we love layered storytelling, we love it when stories touch us on different levels – but at the end of the day it doesn't lead to really emotionally satisfying storytelling and complicated character work. In order to get to that, which is what we really thrive on, we had to come up with very personal motivations for everybody's lives to become complicated by this idea of registration. We went through every character in the story and tried to frame them in a way where they had very personal reasons for feeling complicated and trapped and motivated by this idea of registration. That's how we found our way through the narrative." →

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TEAM STEVE!

Chris Evans flies the flag

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



How did you want your character to evolve in this film?

★ What I think is nice about where they're pushing him is that it's the first time Steve doesn't really know the answer. In the first *Captain America* it's pretty clear Nazis are bad. We can all agree with that. In *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, it's SHIELD being run by Hydra. No conflict there. In the *Avengers* movies, aliens are no good; we want to fight them. It's always pretty cut-and-dry for him... but this one is tricky because this conflict is a little more akin to a day-to-day struggle that we all go through where there are no clear lines between what is right and what is wrong.

Is it hard for Steve to be at odds with Tony when they've been partners in the past?

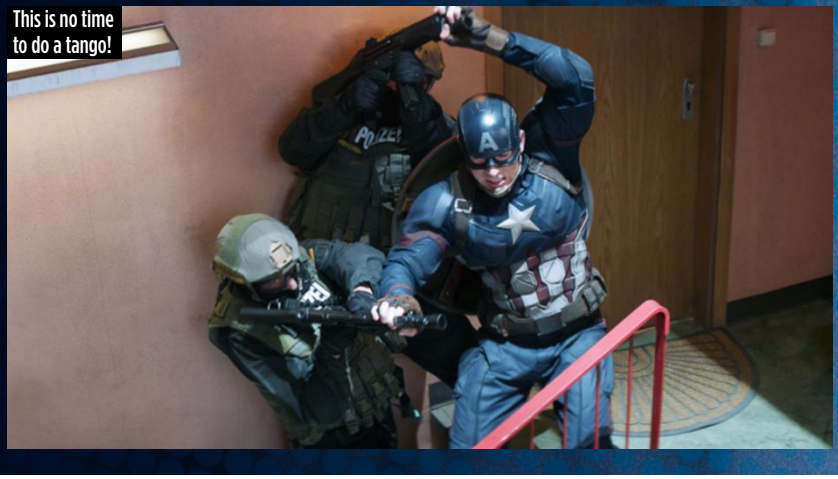
★ Yes, and I think that's what makes it such a good conflict. It's not enemy vs hero or villain vs hero. It's friends vs friends. This is sometimes the most dramatic conflict. When people actually have a history with one another, and care about each other to a point where they would consider themselves brothers, the conflict is that much more difficult to navigate.

Was it fun to bring all these other characters into the film?

★ It's great. What Marvel is so good at doing is weaving this giant blanket together, so any time you get to be the bridge between worlds and universes it's exciting. When I saw *Ant Man* I was enjoying it and saying to myself, "Oh yeah, we're going to have this guy." You get to blend these universes and it's a real treat.

What do you enjoy most about playing this character?

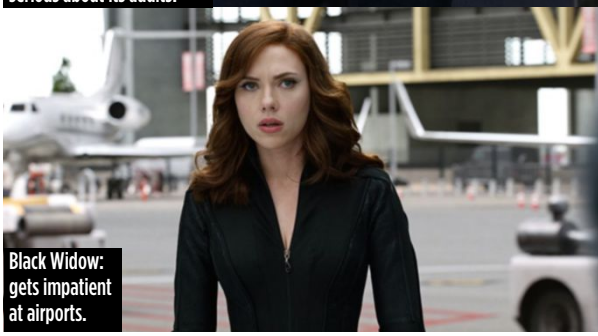
★ He's a good man. Anytime you get to go to set and try to live in a character's headspace for a certain amount of time and process scenes through the eyes of someone who sees life a certain way, you can't help but take some of that home with you. And why not take home a little bit of Steve Rogers?



This is no time to do a tango!



After that Ultron business, the tax office got a lot more serious about its audits.



Black Widow: gets impatient at airports.

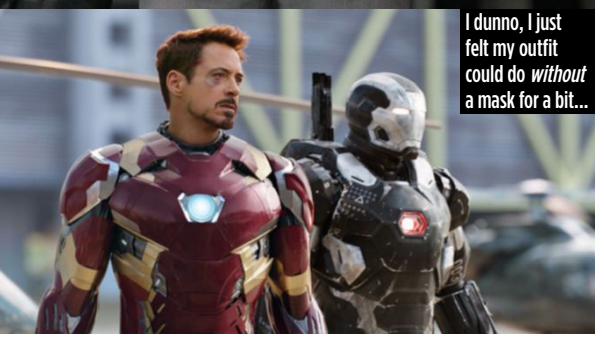
Civil War, the Russo brothers say, is about the repercussions of the city-flattening, Boss Level slamdowns that traditionally provide a popcorn-rattling third act punch to any superhero movie. In a post-SHIELD landscape, the devastation unleashed upon Eastern Europe at the climax of *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* leads to the establishment of the Sokovia Accords, an attempt by the Powers That Be to rein in mankind's costumed saviours. This diktat divides the Avengers into pro and anti camps – and pitches Steve Rogers into direct conflict with Iron Man, alias weaponised one-percenter Tony Stark.

MORE MARVELS

And, as the first entry in Marvel's Phase 3 campaign, it's a movie whose emotional collateral will resonate throughout this big-screen mythology.

"In many ways this movie has more Marvel characters in it than *Age Of Ultron* did," says Anthony Russo. "It is very much about the Marvel Universe having a moment where more of the Universe is being pulled into a single movie than ever before. So it's a touchstone that is going to ripple through more of the individual films than normal. It's so funny that Cap is one of the leaders of the Avengers with Tony – it's like his storyline tends to drive the wider MCU in some respects. In the same way that in *The Winter Soldier* we had the fall of





I dunno, I just felt my outfit could do *without* a mask for a bit...

SHIELD, and that had a big ripple effect, *Civil War* creates an even more substantial and profound ripple effect that goes throughout the entire MCU."

And make no mistake – this movie is packed with the superpowered. Alongside Robert Downey Jr's armour-suited guest shot, we'll see the return of Scarlett Johansson as Black Widow, with her loyalties split between Steve and Tony. Then there's Sebastian Stan as Bucky Barnes, deprogrammed after a career as a brainwashed Hydra assassin but cursed by an incomplete memory. Add in Paul Rudd as Ant-Man, Anthony Mackie as the Falcon, and Elizabeth Olsen as Scarlet Witch – not to mention the hotly-anticipated debuts of Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman) and a neophyte Spider-Man (Tom Holland) – and you have more parahuman DNA in the big-screen mix than you can comfortably slide under an electron microscope.

So how, asks *SFX*, do you keep this a Captain America movie and not a stealth *Avengers 2.5*?

"You have to focus the emotional core on him," says Joe Russo. "He carries the emotional weight of the movie. Certainly Tony is also emotionally motivated but the movie starts with Cap and it ends with Cap. You just pull his throughline stronger and louder than anyone else. In the writing process you have to keep checking back on your scenes and making sure that he's driving the film. That doesn't mean →

TEAM TONY!

Robert Downey Jr suits up

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Iron Man has become a pivotal character in the Marvel Movie Universe. What initially got you excited about doing this movie?

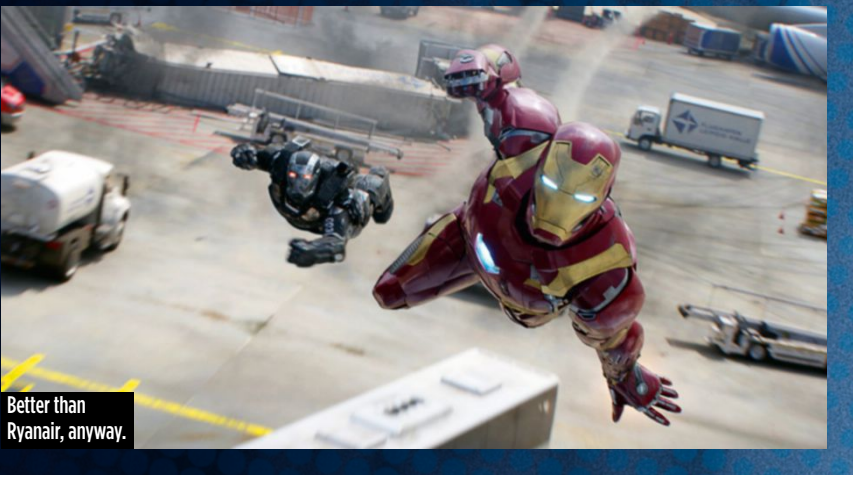
★ The *Avengers* movies were always these colossal, ambitious things but to me *Civil War* was the smart, sexy, Marvel idea. You don't want to see these two characters create a tear in the fabric of their relationship because you know how pervasive it can be. So it gives you a fair amount of shatter to play with. I've always liked the idea of "How do you recover from that?"

Can you tell us about any new upgrades to the suit?

★ In *Iron Man 3* we stripped down Tony to MacGyver without a budget, but there are a couple of little things that happen in this one that I'm really stoked on. A little bit of new tech that he has helps give them a fighting chance against Winter Soldier when they go hand-to-hand. Pretty much if you pick a character on Tony's side or not, he's had an influence. Joss Whedon gave us that entrée in the first *Avengers* and then it really picked up in *Ultron*, so now it's understood. If anyone needs anything, Tony makes it.

What is it that makes Chris Evans a great Captain America?

★ He's like the Spencer Tracy of Marvel. He stands there, tells the truth and then kicks ass in a way that you really believe. His physicality is top notch. Captain America was the single hardest character to launch in this universe and Chris did it the first time, the second time, in both Avengers movies, and he's doing it again. I think he was not overwhelmed but very surprised and somewhat taken aback by the amount of love he gets. When I go to the shopping centres now, I see 20 Captain America shirts wherever I go. It's ceased to become just about him and how well he inhabited the role. It's become part of our culture as a symbol. We work in different ways but I deeply respect the guy. I learn from working with him.



Better than Ryanair, anyway.

WALK LIKE A PANTHER

There's a new hero in town...



★ First seen in the pages of *Fantastic Four #52* in 1966, the Black Panther has the distinction of being the first black superhero in mainstream comics. *Captain America: Civil War* brings T'Challa, champion of the secretive, uber-technological African kingdom of Wakanda, to the screen for the first time, as played by Chadwick Boseman.

"He's a character with an incredibly passionate following," Joe Russo tells *SFX*. "Frankly, for that reason we felt more pressure with Black Panther than we did with Spider-Man! We put a lot of thought and energy into his fighting style, his movement style, who was going to be playing him, what was the right tone for the character, performance-wise. There's a way that Chadwick plays him that's unlike any other character in the Marvel Universe. There's not a big personality to the character. He's very restrained. He's highly intelligent. He's very thoughtful in what he says, and he's very considered when he speaks. He's essentially a quiet character, which is really interesting in contrast to Tony Stark, who rarely sees a quiet moment!"

Boseman will don the vibranium-laced supersuit again in 2018 when the Panther headlines a solo screen adventure. "We're very happy with where the character ended up," says Joe Russo, "but it was an arduous process to bring him to life and to differentiate him and his fighting style from the other characters. We put a lot of thought and effort into that."



he's in every second of the movie, because he isn't. There are other stories told in the film.

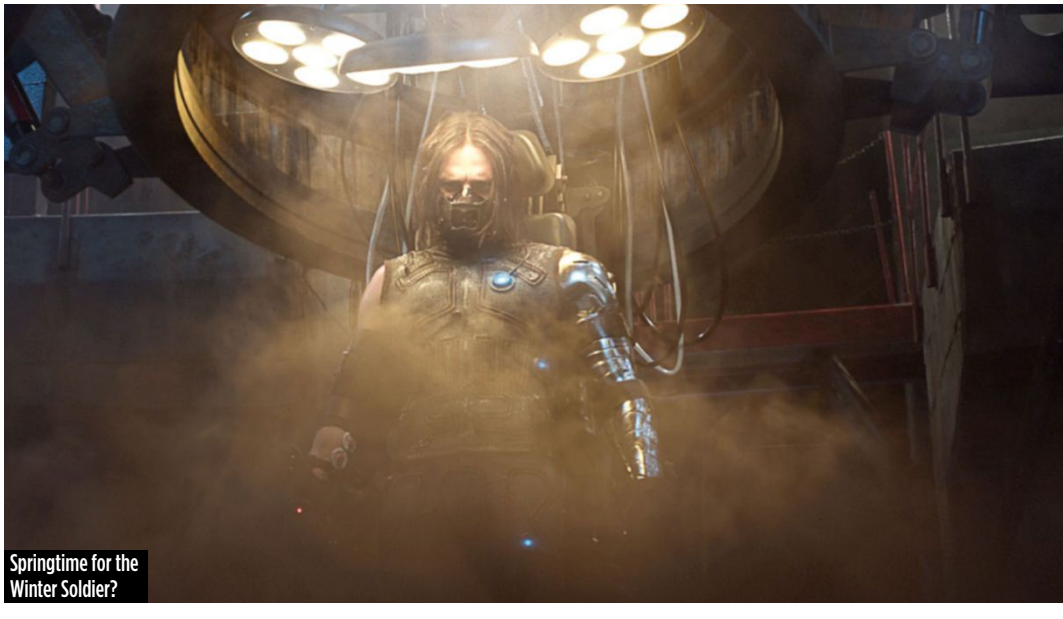
"It does have an Avengers component to it," Russo admits, "more so than traditional single character Marvel movies, so in that regard it will feel like an Avengers movie – even more so, because there are probably more characters in this movie than have ever been in any Marvel film until today. But you just focus that A-story on Captain America. You make sure that all the key beats of that story involve him. And it's his movie."

SHOOTING STARS

Civil War marks Chris Evans's fifth full appearance as the shield-slinger – and a staggering sixth starring turn as Iron Man for Robert Downey Jr, who first wielded the quips and repulsor beams almost a decade ago. As the Russos tell *SFX*, it's a challenge to keep their stars engaged and enthusiastic.

"It's really the same task for everybody," shares Anthony Russo. "How do we excite ourselves? How do we excite the actors? How do we excite the audiences? It's all of the same piece. Specifically we take Steve and Tony to places they've never been before, to complicated places, issues, conflicts and psychological realities that as performers they maybe haven't experienced yet to this degree. When you see the film you'll see that both characters go to places you never thought they would go. And I don't think either of the actors had ever imagined they would go there either. That's the key to re-sparking them – to try and keep finding things in the characters that are surprising to them and surprising to audience."

For all the talk of emotional collateral and heavy-duty character dynamics, Joe Russo insists that this movie keeps the Marvel twinkle intact. "That's always the key. My brother and I always say that we prefer to watch balanced films, balanced storytelling. On a very base level you pay $20 to go to the movies and you get to laugh and cry and be scared and be happy. That's better than just going and crying. Hey, I've got a lot more emotions for my 20 bucks!



Springtime for the Winter Soldier?



Frank Grillo's Crossbones chooses his side in the mask/no mask debate.

"You get to laugh and cry and be scared and be happy. Then you've got a lot more emotions for your 20 bucks"

"So while there is an intensity to this and a psychological realism, in places it's also a much funnier movie than *Winter Soldier*. Hopefully we balance the movie properly so when you watch, it moves seamlessly between those tones. Without question there's a lot of fun to be had at certain points of the movie. We do have characters who are not attached to the emotional core of the film – they're brought in to assist and they don't have the same emotional attachment to what's going on, so they don't have to deal with it on the same level of psychological realism as the other characters. They're allowed to be more humorous."

For all its ambition, *Captain America: Civil War* is just the warm-up act. In 2018 the Russo Brothers will bring us the first part of *Avengers: Infinity War*, a franchise-mashing epic that will mark the pan-cosmic culmination of Marvel's entire screen history to date.

"We broke two outlines," Joe Russo shares with *SFX*. "Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely [*The Winter Soldier, Civil War*] are off writing them. We could not be in better hands than Markus and McFeely, who are in our opinion the best writers working in the business right now. We are very, very happy with the direction we are going in."

The Russo Brothers refuse to be daunted by the sheer scale of their next project. In fact they face it with the kind of noble words you could imagine Captain America declaring to rally the troops.

"One of our biggest mottos is that we will never make decisions out of fear," says Joe Russo. "If you do, you just get paralysed. You can't let a studio let you make decisions out of fear. You can't let the audience let you make decisions out of fear. You can't let the ticking clock on a shoot day let you make decisions out of fear. Most importantly – and this is the one thing that we've learned over our careers – you have to please yourself and then hope that everybody else likes what you did. That's how we've addressed everything we've done in the Marvel Universe. We've tried to please ourselves as fans first and then you hope that has a mass appeal to it."

Captain America: Civil War opens on 29 April.

PATRIOT GAMES

Five of the weirdest moments in Captain America history



CAP DISSES INDY

★ 1982's *Captain America #268* saw Steve Rogers turn film critic after a date watching *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. Ever the '40s throwback, he's niggled that Indiana Jones is "essentially amoral".

LET HIM EAT CAKE!

★ Cap's impeccable principles were sorely tested in the '70s when he found himself forced to shill for Hostess Twinkies in the back pages of Marvel comics. Who knew the American Dream had "luscious cream filling"?



KEEP ON TREKKIN'

★ Who's this throwing a patriotic shape? None other than Jonathan Frakes, alias Riker in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In the '70s the future Number One worked for Marvel as a living action figure.





IT'S ALL GONE WEIRD!

★ As the popularity of superhero comics plummeted in the late 1940s, Captain America's long-serving title was shamelessly revamped as a horror comic in a doomed bid to woo back the kids.

WHAT THE HOWL?

★ Meet Wolfcap, the Were-Avenger! Yes, when the villainous Nightshade injects Steve Rogers with a freaky mutagenic potion, the noble defender of American values takes a turn for the hairy and howling... Aroooo!





ON SET!

UNCHARTED REALMS

It's time to enter the unknown... Benji Wilson is on set for the sixth season as GAME OF THRONES goes beyond the words of George RR Martin

The *Game Of Thrones* throne room, a permanent set in one of the vast soundstages at Titanic Studios in Belfast, doesn't get used that often these days. When you think back over the past few series much of *Game Of Thrones* has moved away from what used to be *GoT* Ground Zero. More time has been spent at the Red Keep, in Castle Black, in Meereen, in occupied Winterfell or beyond the Wall itself.

Still, at heart the throne is what everyone is fighting about and so sitting in the real thing, on set, is enlightening. Like so many of the *Game Of Thrones* props and sets it's a work of art in itself, a latticework of resin swordblades, woven together and then painted to look like burnished steel. But the most striking thing about it, when you park yourself for the money shot, is how uncomfortable it is. A few of the points of the blades jut out where they shouldn't.

This is deliberate.

"They designed it at the start so that no one sits comfortably," says Tom Martin, the series' head of construction.

It could be one of the series' many enduring slogans – no one sits comfortably on the throne. And discomfort is part of the *Game Of Thrones* effect too. Last season was the most brutal, the most thrilling, the most ferocious, and at times the most disturbing yet: the Sons of the Harpy suddenly encircling Daenerys in the Fighting Pits, her escape by dragon, the almost unwatchable rape of Sansa Stark at the hands of the hideous Ramsay Bolton and of course the death of Jon Snow. It's a series that looks for a reaction and very often gets it.

"We knew last season was huge and that there'd be very strong emotional responses for a number of scenes," says Bryan Cogman, writer and supervising producer. "It wasn't by design but we were aware when we were making season five that it was the darkest season up to that point and that we were really pushing our characters and taking them to extreme places and on emotional journeys. And our actors and crew. So we take it seriously as we are doing it and we knew it would elicit a response. But I'd rather be working on something that elicits that response than something that's forgotten about five minutes after you watch it."

Even Cogman admits that he wasn't quite ready for the response to the rape of Sansa, a scene that he wrote and which wasn't in the original book.

"The hardest scene I had to write was Sansa's wedding night. Hard for me emotionally, because, believe it or not, we actually love the characters we write about that we spend our entire lives with; and it was very hard on the day because I was the producer on set just getting that right, making sure Sophie felt comfortable and everyone around her was comfortable and getting the right tone for that. That was certainly the one that made me lose the most sleep.

"But the reaction? I'm proud of it and I wouldn't change a thing. I'll defend that scene until the day I die. And her story's not over. It's part of a bigger story."

EVER-EXPANDING

Everything on *Game Of Thrones* just keeps on getting bigger. The viewing figures beat all previous records in both the UK and America last year, and when you visit *Game Of Thrones* HQ in Belfast the sets are always being enlarged, rebuilt, repurposed. This year *SFX* notes that the Red Keep has sprouted a couple of new anterooms; the Twins, the castle in the Riverlands that was the scene of the infamous Red Wedding, appears to be back; whereas the top of the Wall, where Tyrion so famously took a leak in series one, has gone for the time being. Just when you thought the biggest TV show in the fantasy world couldn't get any bigger, it does.

"It's like Daenerys' dragons," says producer





Can the Three-Eyed Raven make Bran Stark's dreams come true?



Arya Stark has paid for violating the assassins' code with her sight.

> "The world of the show as we knew it was irrevocably changed in a big way for all of our characters"

Olly Butler as he shows *SFX* around. "This thing just keeps on growing."

It's an apt metaphor, because as Dany's dragons get bigger and more powerful, they are also becoming more unpredictable. The same goes for *Game Of Thrones* in season six. This is the first year where the series has overtaken George RR Martin's *Song Of Ice And Fire* source novels entirely. Anything could happen and it probably will.

"It's certainly a huge challenge," says Cogman, asked about what it was like for the writers to fly solo for the first time. "But ultimately when the outline of the season was done, in many ways it was the most satisfied I'd felt because it had been harder to get there."

What to expect then?

"We hit the ground running this year," says Cogman. "That's a function of where we are in the story. Most viewers, if they're with us at this point, have watched the first five series. Otherwise they're just going to be terribly confused. So they'll either be confused and okay with that or they'll go back and watch the first five. In either case it makes sense to just get straight in to it."

The end of season five – with Stannis Baratheon and Jon Snow dead (apparently), Arya blinded at the House of Black and White, Sansa and Theon on the run from Ramsay, and Daenerys captured by Dothraki – felt like a turning point.

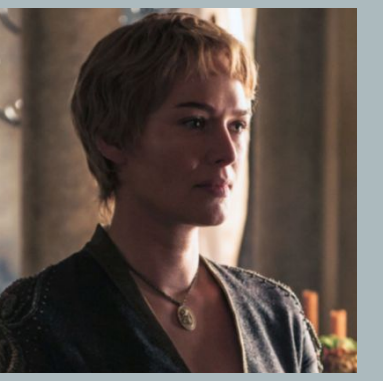
"The world of the show as we knew it was irrevocably changed in a big way for all of our characters – this is about the second phase of the story. The rebuilding, the aftermath."

Cogman won't go in to any further detail, and with good reason: now that the show has gone off book, even fans of the novels have no idea what is going to happen. Spoilers are being protected even more rigorously – this year's scripts even had code names for characters, and the actors had to sign off just to get pages by hand.

"The reason we're protective," says Cogman, "is we'd love the audience to experience the highs and lows and the thrills with the characters as the characters are experiencing →

"She's At Her Scheming Best This Season!"

LENA HEADEY *is* CERSEI



At the end of last season Cersei hit rock bottom with her Walk of Shame. What next?

✪ She begins her climb up again of course! Because she's such a survivor and now she is rid of the men that were holding her back she is as usual creating ways, making plans to rise quite far. She's at her scheming best this season.

How does she take the news that her daughter is dead – and that Jaime's trip to Dorne may have played a part?

✪ Obviously their relationship's complicated anyway. He doesn't do what he says he's going to do which is to bring her home. So they're in an odd place but also the strongest place they've been together for a long time. But as usual Cersei has other plans. Weirdly at this point she's almost surrendered to the prophecy [that all her children will die] and that it's going to happen.

What's been the hardest scene you've had to film on the series?

✪ The harder they are the more I love it. I want to eat it up when it's tough. It's all pretty intense this year. But the Walk of Shame was hard just because it was three solid days of staying there and being in that place. I always knew that was where Cersei was going to go; we didn't know beyond that. So I was looking forward to taking her where nobody thought she'd go. Or be as vulnerable as she was. And as driven, still, by fury during the whole thing.

Who do you think that Cersei hates the most?

✪ I think it's Tyrion. I think she admires her father and Tyrion for their wits but I think she despises both of them also. And she wants to be Jaime, somewhere in the mix of all that. She doesn't respect Margaery enough to really dislike her. She respects Tyrion enough to hate him.

"Coming Back Was Nerve-Wracking..."

ISAAC HEMPSTEAD WRIGHT *is* BRAN



Set the scene for Bran as we begin season six...

❂ We've been away from him for somewhere between the space of six months and a year, I think, an amount of time in which he's been honing his skills as a Greenseer and as a Warg. Well, now he's moving away from the Warging and into other things, more into how he can channel the power of the Weirwood tree to be able to see into the past and the future. The Three-Eyed Raven is sort of the king of that and he's trying to teach Bran what he can use it for and where it'll go.

Give us a hint of what he can do with the visions...

❂ Pretty much all he can do is just see and look at events of the past and learn from them. But Bran has obviously got other ideas because in the visions he can see things that remind him of happier times. He obviously wants to stay in there forever but the Three-Eyed Raven is saying no he can't because then you're in real trouble. But there's also a slight sense every now and again that Bran might be able to interact with these past figures and characters through these visions – we're not quite sure.

What was it like for you coming back to the set after having been away last season?

❂ I'd literally not been on a set for a whole year so coming back on to the *Game Of Thrones* set was nerve-wracking. Also, between season four and season six the show had got that much more massive so I was thinking, "God, can I still remember how to do this?" I think the first day I was pretty bad, looking back, I have to say! But more than anything it was nice to see everyone again. A lot of people I hadn't seen since season four so it was great to catch up.



Perhaps Ramsay Bolton should change his name back to Ramsay Snow.

> "The danger is that when the magical elements become bigger they overwhelm the human elements"

them. We want the audience to participate in the story in that way. So the idea of spoiling it means someone might not be able to have that full experience we'd like them to have. That's not to say if somebody knows everything ahead of time they're not going to enjoy it in their own way... Look, you know what it is? It's the feeling we got when we first read the books. We didn't have the Red Wedding spoiled for us because only a few people at that time knew about it. You have that incredible rush of emotion. I threw the book across the room. We want that for our audience."

KEEPING SECRETS

It's getting harder to safeguard the audience, though: this is the first year that the show has had paparazzi on set, looking deliberately for spoilers.

"It's frustrating," says Cogman. "I know it all comes from a love of the show and an interest in the show so it doesn't anger me. But it's disappointing if because of that someone who didn't want something spoiled is spoiled."

He's right, yet the irony is that on set, if you're a fan, it's practically impossible not to find yourself scouring for clues. Unlike the Throne Room, the Grand Sept of Baelor set, a 360-degree curlicued cathedral that is the home of the religious leader the High Sparrow (Jonathan Pryce), has obviously been in heavy use. The Sparrows and their extremist wing, the Faith Militant, are not leaving King's Landing just yet. And the rows and rows of flayed grey tunics in the costume department, all artfully distressed, suggest that the undead hordes of the White Walkers are also set to play a major role. In the armoury, where every single weapon is made by hand, *SFX* thinks we can spot Jon Snow's sword Longclaw – is this a sign that the former Lord Commander of the Night's Watch is set for a resurrection?

"We keep all of the signature weapons for exhibitions and that sort of thing," says armourer Stephen Murphy, poker-faced. So once again, like Jon Snow, we appear to know nothing.





Tyrion Lannister continues to try and maintain control over Meereen.

Later, speaking to John Bradley and Hannah Murray, we find out that Sam and Gilly will go to Oldtown, the home of the Citadel, where Sam is to train to be a Maester. On the way they will meet Sam's family, the Tarlys, with *Downton Abbey*'s James Faulkner playing his father, the man who sent him away to the Night's Watch in the first place.

"Sam's been told by his father that fighting, martial valour, is the only way to be. That learning and magic will never help anybody. But of course the moment that he kills the White Walker with the dragonglass blade is something because it was Sam's first or maybe second encounter with the supernatural; when he realised that there are bigger threats than threats you can just chop in half with a sword."

This is the balance that *Game Of Thrones* tries to strike. It weaves in magic and fantasy to a historical framework, but not to the extent where it might scare away a non SF fan.

"What always attracted all of us to the story," says Bryan Cogman, "was that the magic was on the periphery, at least at the beginning – and it's slowly creeping back in. The danger is that when the magical elements become bigger they overwhelm the human elements. We never want to lose sight of that – as fun as it is to now have all these resources where you can do all these amazing special effects you never want that to be the thing you're building a story around. The human elements are what bring people to the show."

In other words it's a fine balance. You don't want to let anyone get too comfortable on the throne.

Game Of Thrones is on Sky Atlantic in the UK from 25 April.



Jaime and Cersei have a lot to discuss...

"I've Never Seen Him As A Bad Guy"

NIKOLAJ COSTER-WALDAU *is* JAIME LANNISTER



How does Jaime react when he gets back to King's Landing and finds out that Cersei has been made to do the Walk of Shame?

He's not happy at all! If he could he would just go in and deal with it in a very swift way in his usual manner. But there are quite a lot of Sparrows in King's Landing now. Everything has changed since he went to Dorne. He'll never go back there again. Now I'm just trying to help my sister, but having come back from Dorne with her dead daughter it takes a bit of time for them to get back on track.

What's next for the Lannisters?

We're trying to come up with a plan and trying to build new alliances. After Tywin died we're very weak as a family. We might have the biggest army but we also have the biggest debt and of course the king is very young and he is easily persuaded by his wife. Who's also in a bit of a situation.

Do you think Tommen knows Jaime's his father?

He's definitely heard the rumours but it's kind of an unspoken secret in a weird way. They still have to pretend.

Do you see Jaime as one of the good guys now?

I've never seen him as a bad guy. I've seen him do some horrible things but he'd do anything to protect his loved ones. Even if that included pushing a little boy out of a window. Redemption is an interesting theme. It's all in the eye of the beholder. Remember that in season one the first thing we saw Ned Stark do was to take the head off that kid whose biggest crime was he ran away from the Night's Watch. Because he was just really, really scared. That was deemed honourable to take off his head? Good guy, bad guy, it changes all the time.

ELIZABETH HENSTRIDGE

SHIELD's geek queen on love, death and rolling with the unexpected

Words by Tara Bennett /// Photography by Maarten de Boer

You never know where an acting gig is going to take you. Just ask Britain's own Elizabeth Henstridge. Cast as brainy scientist Jemma Simmons on Marvel's *Agents Of SHIELD* she assumed a staid existence awaited her, filled with lab coats and tinkering with data. Well, she's certainly experienced some of that in the series but, of late, Simmons has also been violently absorbed by black goo, left to survive on a stark alien planet, and tortured within an inch of her life. Luckily, Henstridge has had three years to become far more Zen about expecting the unexpected. "I came from theatre where you know exactly where your character is going to end up and how to get there," she tells *SFX* during a break in shooting. "It's very structured in a way, where this is completely open. You don't know if all of a sudden they're going to say that you were brought up by apes in the forest, so you have to roll with it."

Looking back at three years of adventures, what do you think are Jemma's defining moments in the series?

I think the most dramatic moment that defined her was the end of season one when Fitz [Iain De Caestecker] confessed his love and she didn't know how to respond in that moment. It shaped her a lot and her journey in season two. It was the first time she'd ever not known what to say. So that started a huge growing period for her where she had to be vulnerable, she had to not know what was going on and had to be comfortable in her own skin not knowing exactly what was happening next. Then she went to the planet and fell in love with another guy [laughs].

How has the experience of being stuck on a hostile planet, finding new love and then losing it, impacted her?

I think everything that happened on the planet, and after, is making her question everything she's ever believed in, and being part of this team. Is it all worth it? She's experienced all these alien things and experienced relationships that have been lost. I think she's just been through so much and seeing the people she loves in pain because of her actions, we find her questioning herself and her choices. She's grieving.

Many assumed Fitz and Simmons were fated to be together. Given Will's death, could that be on the cards?

When she found out Will didn't make it, I really wanted to get across that she wasn't angry at Fitz for not bringing him back. She was so pleased Fitz is back so now we get to see what they can salvage of their relationship.

Do they react differently around one another as the season proceeds?

The stakes have been so high that moving forward we're not going to see as much awkwardness. They've invested so much in each other and been through so much there's an overwhelming appreciation for each other. The only question becomes where does that lead? Is it romantic? Can it become romantic? Are they just better friends than ever?

Beyond Fitz, how have these trials, and even recent torture, changed Simmons?

She does hold survivor's guilt that she made it back from the planet and everybody had to suffer to make that happen. There's a feeling of inadequacy that she couldn't face herself, and in those moments of torture, that she couldn't get out of it. In some ways, I think she's probably almost grateful to have that pain that she was suffering for someone else for a change. She wanted to protect Fitz and she felt strongly in their relationship that she'd rather be in pain than for him to be in pain. She wanted to stand up against a bully and it's definitely changed her.

Are we going to see more of a physical Simmons like Daisy (Chloe Bennet) or Melinda (Ming-Na Wen)?

I had a lot of questions at the start about when we would see Simmons in more of a combat role and when we would see her train. Obviously, we don't know what's to come but I like that she's still a nerd at the end of it.

What's Simmons' focus now that she's back with the SHIELD team?

She's always wanted to do the right thing and protect people. In the fight of good versus evil, she sees herself on the side of good and protecting the people of the world. She also wants to put her life on the line for this team who put their lives on the line for her. She's never felt closer to them as a unit and she owes her life to every single one of them. Moving forward, she wants to protect her family, keep the world safe and... to kiss Fitz more [laughs].

Agents Of SHIELD airs on E4 on Sundays.

Biodata

Occupation
→ Actress
Born
→ 11 September 1987
From
→ Sheffield
Greatest hits
→ *The Thompsons, Hollyoaks, The Wolves At The Door*
Random fact
→ Henstridge doesn't just act, but also plays three instruments and even scored the 2011 film *And The Kid*.

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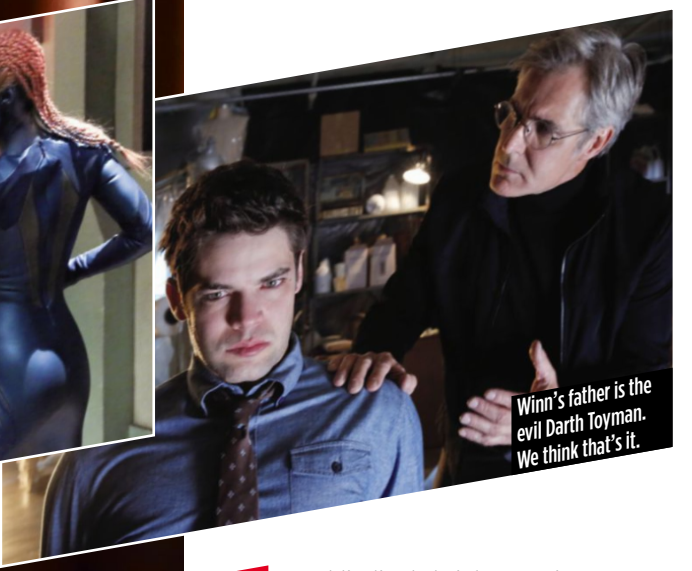
"SHE'S ALWAYS WANTED TO DO THE RIGHT THING"



SUNS AND DAUGH


Indigo's look had a certain mystique about it, Kara felt...


Yes, I got the memo, but black's just not my colour, okay?


Winn's father is the evil Darth Toyman. We think that's it.

T E R S

SUPERGIRL continues to soar... Joseph McCabe visits National City to speak with cast and crew

It's a blindingly bright morning at Warner Bros Studios in Burbank. So warm as to erase all knowledge of the fact that it's early January. After taking our time to walk across the expansive lot, it's almost a disappointment when *SFX* must leave the sunshine to step onto a darkened soundstage... Even if it means we're about to chat with the most powerful woman in the world.

It's entirely appropriate that the Land of Endless Summer, Southern California, should serve as the home of TV's Supergirl. For while Warner has made Superman's Metropolis as foreboding on the big screen as the Dark Knight's Gotham City, his younger cousin Kara Zor-El – under the guidance of executive producers Greg Berlanti, Andrew Kreisberg, and Ali Adler – has been imbued with the most potent superpower of all in today's world: a sense of optimism.

"I feel an incredible amount of pride for what we're doing," says the show's star, Melissa Benoist, when we meet her on the cavernous DEO Headquarters set, where Kara works with her sister Alex and her boss Hank Henshaw (aka J'onn J'onzz, the Martian Manhunter). Today Benoist is wearing the simple sweater and work slacks of Supergirl's alter ego, Kara Danvers, who must report to no-nonsense tycoon Cat Grant, CEO of CatCo Worldwide Media. It's easy to see why she was cast as the Last Daughter Of Krypton, as her words mirror her character's hopefulness and positivism...

"I feel that people were ready to see a strong female heroine, the way Supergirl is. I get to experience that every time a little girl comes on set, or just any child really. Anytime I'm in the suit, people notice. It's kind of indescribable. →

> “Children are really the way I see the true effect of what we’re doing”

But children are really the way that I see the true effect of what we’re doing here, and I feel a lot of humble pride about that.”

Kreisberg, who’s here for this last day of shooting the first season’s 14th episode (“Truth, Justice And The American Way”), is quick to point out while Supergirl is an optimist, she’s by no means naive.

“That was a misperception,” he tells us. “That this show was sort of overly sunny, and that Supergirl herself might have been overly sunny. We always saw her as this person who experienced probably the worst trauma you can experience. I mean, she literally lost everybody she loved – her mother and her father. She’s one of [Krypton’s] few remaining survivors. That’s a lot to take in, and it’s a lot to walk around with, that sort of survivor’s guilt. Even when we are breaking a story that could be considered a little bit lighthearted, we always take into account the damage that Kara sustained as a child, and that she brings with her to her adult life.”

BACK TO KRYPTON?

It’s a life that’s become more complicated than ever in this debut season’s second half, as Kara faces new foes like the Toyman, Master Jailer (whose episode is shooting today on a separate stage), and a Bizarro Supergirl created by the wicked Maxwell Lord. There’s even a visit from *Smallville*’s Supergirl, actress Laura Vandervoort — who plays the villainous Brainiac’s cold-blooded “descendant” Indigo. But Kreisberg’s most excited about a menace pulled from the pages of one of the most beloved Superman comic book stories of all: “For The Man Who Has Everything” (from 1985’s *Superman Annual #11*).

“When Greg brought me on to the project, I talked to him early on about wanting to do one of my favourite comic books, ‘For The Man Who Has Everything’ by Alan Moore. So Episode 13 is actually ‘For The Girl Who Has Everything’. We’re doing an adaptation of that comic book, but with Kara. We just finished filming it. It’s the Black Mercy. Kara wakes up and she’s back on Krypton and has no idea how or why she got there... It’s one of the things I’m the most excited about having done, because it seemed like such a pipe dream when we were having these early conversations and now it’s part of the show.”



Who needs a magic lasso when you can use an alien jailer’s own chain against him?

No antagonist, however, presents as great an ongoing challenge for Kara this year as her own hard-as-nails boss, who, in the show’s midseason finale, finally learned her secret identity and asked Kara to remove her glasses...

“We wondered at the beginning of the year how the modern-day audience would react to that on a regular basis,” says Berlanti of Kara’s time-honoured disguise. “Would people crave something more than just the tried-and-true glasses? To a certain degree, we have to just kind of own the mythology that exists... But what was just as interesting to us is the nature of their dynamic. Their relationship – the boss/prodigy, the sort of big sister/little sister dynamic – all of those relationships that they express in the workplace are just as fascinating to us. Part of what we’re kind of also setting up, in a way, is that by not telling her the truth there’s in essence a bit of a betrayal there.”

“I just think of Cat as this sort of narcissist,” says Flockhart, explaining Cat’s long journey to discovering Kara’s secret. “She doesn’t really notice. She really doesn’t take her in. She’s talking at her a lot, but she’s not really looking at her. She’s on that work path; and when she sees Supergirl, it’s a whole different kind of feeling. She probably flutters a little bit, even though she hides it. It just wouldn’t dawn on her. At least that’s how I make it work for me.”

Kreisberg tells *SFX* that the show’s producers take a similar approach to the one they’ve employed on their other hit DC Television Universe series, including *The Flash, Arrow* and *Legends Of Tomorrow*.

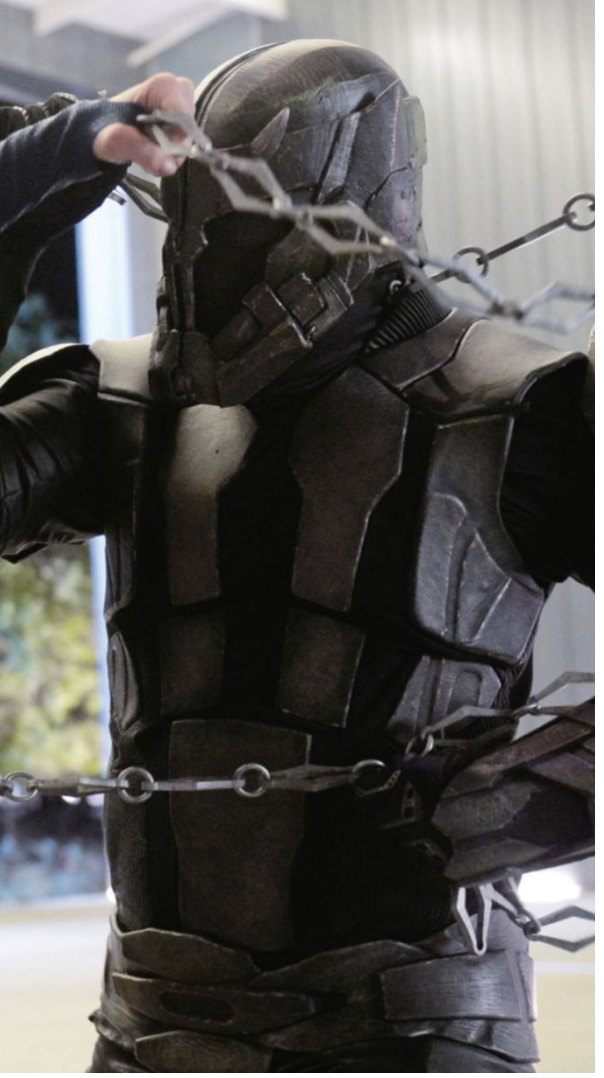
“We always start with ‘What does this episode mean to Kara?’ Just as on *Arrow*, it’s ‘What does it mean to Oliver?’, and on *Flash*, ‘What does it mean to Barry?’ Then subsequently, ‘What does it also mean to all



What? Alan Moore’s actually happy with an adaptation?!



What is it with you Kryptonians and your ice sculpture fetish?



the side characters? And what is the idea or the issue or the topic that we want to explore this week?' Whoever the villain is, that's the icing on the cake. That always comes last. It's always, 'Well, if we want to tell a story about x, y or z...' We figure out how we want to impact our characters emotionally and how we want to fit it in terms of the overall arc of the season that we're doing. Who they end up fighting always comes last. We never sit down and say to ourselves, 'Oh, we really want to do a fight between Kara and Red Tornado!' It was an episode that started with, 'Well, we want to do an episode about anger'; and her ending up fighting and going to town on a robot – that then became angry itself... that came later.

"The reason to do 'For The Girl Who Has Everything'," adds Kreisberg, "as much as I wanted to do it – and I've literally been pitching doing it every episode since we started – the reason it's coming at the time that it is, is that it's going to come at a point in the season where Kara is going to be feeling very lost and very alone and very detached from the people in her life. From Cat, from Alex, from Hank, from Winn, from James. So when she is granted this sort of *It's A Wonderful Life* moment, where she can be living in this fantasy, where nothing terrible happened and she grew up on Krypton, there's actually a reason for her to want it to be true. Because it's much more palatable and easier for her to be there than on Earth, where she has a lot of work to do. As always, we never think of any of these things as gimmicks, it's always when it's the right time to do it. Then the joy for us is, we've set it up in such a way that when it is the right time to do it, you really get to explore it."

Since Supergirl is only the second DC comic-book heroine (after Wonder Woman in the 1970s) to receive her own live-action TV show, today's fans may be wondering why the current wave of superheroine shows – including Marvel's *Agent Carter* and *Jessica Jones* – took so very long to arrive.

Kreisberg's cohort Ali Adler smiles at the question and tells us she's delighted that "it's taken this long to get to the issue of gender in this conversation today. Because that was always the first question.

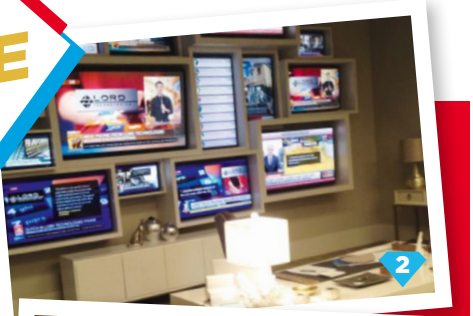
"I think, as with anything," says the exec, "we're always mid-change. The world is ready for it. We have Melissa and this amazing cast here to show that it doesn't matter. Supergirl is strong and powerful and brave." ●

You can catch Supergirl on Sky 1 in the UK and CBS in the US.

WELCOME TO NATIONAL CITY

SFX tours the sets of Supergirl...







1 KARA'S DESK A smashed phone – plus the lyrics to Taylor Swift's "Blank Space" scrawled on a notepad – indicate that Cat Grant may have pushed her assistant just a little too far. (And after Kara got her coffee at Noonan's bar!) Is the "superflare" in the *Tribune*'s headline mere coincidence?

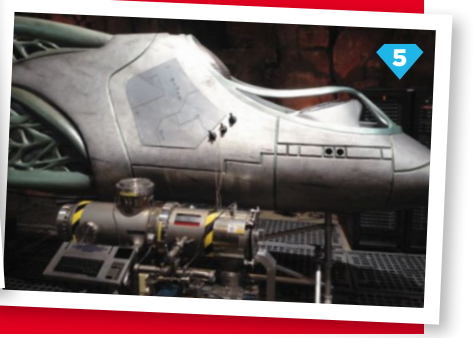
2 CAT'S OFFICE With an entire wall of monitors behind her desk, Cat Grant's office is where the CatCo CEO monitors news throughout National City and the world, while commanding her own media empire. She can also oversee her assistant Kara and IT employee Winn, whose desks are located just outside the office's front wall of transparent glass.

3 JAMES OLSEN'S OFFICE The former *Daily Planet* photographer, CatCo's current art director, and Supergirl's right-hand man, has an office just around the corner from Kara's desk and Cat's office. Inside can be found his collection of cameras as well as his prize-winning photographs, which are scattered throughout.

4 KARA'S APARTMENT There's always an open window or several in Kara Danvers' apartment, through which Supergirl can make a hasty departure when trouble threatens National City. But there's also a comfy couch and chair on which the Danvers sisters can enjoy potstickers in off hours.

5 KARA'S ROCKET The spacecraft that brought Kara Zor-El to Earth is the most eye-catching piece of technology in the headquarters of the DEO (Department of Extra-Normal Operations), where it's carefully protected and monitored by director Hank Henshaw's team of agents.





PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSEPH McCABE



More Things In Heaven And Earth



Four hundred years after his death, we're calling it: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was the greatest fantasy writer of his era. Or perhaps any era... Jem Roberts puts quill to parchment

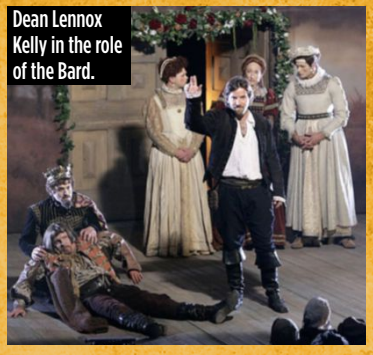
William Shakespeare was rarely an artist for "first"s. If anything, the seamless blending of fantasy and reality in theatre and literature was the norm for all his forebears, from the unknown author of *Beowulf* to Chaucer, and particularly Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, imaginably the *Force Awakens* of its day – a huge effects-driven fantasy from the Admiral's Men company, so impressive it was said to feature actual demons. "Genre" as we know it hadn't been invented, and dramatists were happy to use the supernatural and outlandish techniques to get a point across, even if it's in the middle of a historical epic.

As the principal writer for the rival Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare would receive commissions and collaborate with the company, but the level of control he seems to have had over which plays were staged makes him a kind of "showrunner" for the most popular entertainment outlet of his era. The first time the ascendant writer crossed the line from staging historical propaganda to full-blown fantasy was in the climax to *Richard III*, when the tyrant's numerous victims all pop up on the eve of Bosworth to bid him "Despair and die". Between this pilot for a series of ghostly guilt trips (Caesar, Banquo, Hamlet's shit-stirring dad) and Shakespeare's final fantasy masterpiece *The Tempest*, the playwright's published works would always be split into three genres – History, Comedy and Tragedy – but there would be a fair few gigantic strides in other future genres made within those Complete Works.

A MOST RARE VISION

A few years later, with his incredible lyrical skill in a romantic vein proven by *Romeo & Juliet*, Shakespeare debuted a new play which couldn't be further from the bloodied English battlefields for which he was best known – a knockabout fairytale that must have seemed to →


To be, or not to be
2B
NOT 2B


Dean Lennox Kelly in the role of the Bard.

WILLIAM AND THE DOCTOR

No SF hero is more intimate with history's greatest playwright than the Doctor...

● The Doctor's travels originally had only the slightest on-screen brush with Shakespeare, who was briefly seen chatting with the Doctor's future squeeze Elizabeth I on the Time-Space Visualiser in Hartnell adventure "The Chase" in 1965. But once Russell T Davies had revived the show, it was just a case of which writer would get to team their hero up with Bill first. Step forward Gareth Roberts, whose Elizabethan yarn "The Shakespeare Code" debuted in in 2007. The Tenth Doctor takes new recruit Martha Jones for an eye-opening jaunt to Tudor England which quickly escalates into a rush to save the planet from the Weird-Sister-like Carrionites ("Sycorax" having unfortunately just been used up as the name of an alien race in "The Christmas Invasion"), who have helped design the Globe Theatre as an intergalactic sound projector. Using pseudo-voodoo to trick Shakespeare (here presented as a swaggering Russell Brand-like celebrity) into inserting coordinates into the text of lost play *Love's Labour's Won*, the hideous crones hoped to open a portal for the Carrionites to vanquish Earth, but the Doctor urges Shakespeare to cancel the process with an improvised demonstration of the power of words – and a little extra help from JK Rowling.


Martha (Freema Agyeman) gets a history lesson.

be a complete anomaly in Shakespeare's oeuvre, like Jimmy McGovern adding a musical about unicorns to his CV. Constructed from a jumble of poetic sources, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems less of a bolt from the blue when compared to the tradition of British pageants, masques and mystery plays in which all kinds of devils, pixies and bogeys were the norm – dazzling audiences with the latest stage effects and stunts. *Dream* was a romantic comedy with a bit of everything, but the clash between boastful weaver Nick Bottom and the absurd retinue of Queen Titania's court has always been the centrepiece of the play. Again, this being Shakespeare, there's nothing novel about the idea of a mortal lured into the faerie world, but by bringing the old folk cliché to three-dimensional life, the play has been opening minds and inspiring fantasy creators for four centuries. *Final Fantasy*, for example, is dripping with the play's influence, featuring a hero called Puck, as well as warring lovers and fairy royalty amidst a host of deliberate Shakespearean references.

The Chamberlain's Men soon returned to history as their theme, but when the company evolved into the King's Men in the new century, they staged a great return to presenting a world where the usual rules of existence are dropped, a far darker entertainment than anything that had gone before. *Macbeth*, tailored to the avid superstition of the new King James, was as blood-steeped as any play in the English language – if not in body count, certainly in theme and spirit. There was no room for subtlety of audience reading in Jacobean theatre. *Macbeth*'s world is one where magic is real, and horrifically dangerous. The Three Weird Sisters really can summon up visions that foretell the future, and Banquo's torn body rises from the ditch where he was dispatched, to ruin the antihero's party. One scene almost unerringly cut from every adaptation of the play was a kind of dark side *Dream*, with the demon Hecate revealing herself to be the meddling trio's boss, just as keen to toy with mortals as Titania, but with far bloodier results.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Presenting spectacle which raised the punters out of their dung-filled lives and showed them something totally out of this world was probably on Shakespeare's mind as a new era of theatre came along, with the opening of the indoor Blackfriars theatre. Moving plays inside seemed revolutionary at the time, offering a whole new palette for playwrights to work with – now there could be lighting effects, stage intimacy and no weather to worry about. At the same time, the middle-aged Bard was allegedly considering


Forbidden Planet's Robby the Robot was essentially two *Tempest* characters.

retirement, and reports of a shipwreck on the island of Bermuda gave him an incredible idea for the play that would provide his swansong, at least as a solo playwright. He created an island located right here on Earth, which nonetheless was "full of wonder", with the only resident human beings the castaway Duke of Milan Prospero and his daughter Miranda.

The Tempest is Gene Roddenberry a few centuries early – a group of accidental adventurers, albeit global rather than interstellar, are washed up in a strange, alien environment, coming into contact with lifeforms they can barely begin to understand, and learning moral lessons from their experience. With the spectacle on offer for *The Tempest*'s debut run – from Ariel, in harpy form, taunting the shipwrecked wanderers via hallucinatory pageant or freezing them in time, to the horror of the witch Sycorax's mutant son, Caliban – Shakespeare, via the magician Prospero, outdid anything Marlowe's Faustus conjured up. A fitting end to the greatest career in show business...

None of Shakespeare's creations have unlocked the door for science fiction and fantasy writers more than his last. Aldous Huxley's dystopian masterpiece took its name from the astonishment of Miranda when she first sees other humans on her island: "O brave new world, that has such people in it!" while a banned copy of the Complete Works is also the bible of savage icon John.



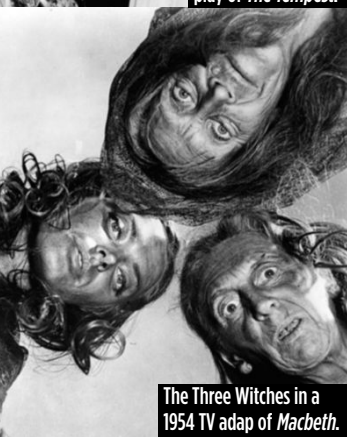
But even more celebrated sci-fi use of the play came with Fred Wilcox's *Forbidden Planet* in 1956 – one of the most influential movies in science fiction history, overwhelmingly based on Shakespeare's otherworldly experiment. True, the tale of Dr

REX (5), GETTY (1)


Rula Lenska shares some animal magic in a 1978 *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*


Richard Burton as Caliban in a 1954 play of *The Tempest.*


Captain Kirk gets a mouthful of Shakespearean verse.


The Three Witches in a 1954 TV adap of *Macbeth.*

> "One of the most influential movies in science fiction history is based on a Shakespeare play"

Morbius and his daughter Altaira stranded on the alien planet Altair IV and the investigation party sent to explore the area doesn't translate *The Tempest* entirely – the end is entirely new, and Ariel and Caliban were arguably combined in the form of Robby the Robot. But *Forbidden Planet* proved long ago that "Shakespeare in space" is just one of endless permutations of the man's works.

SCI-FIE UPON THEM!

Certainly, other movie genres, particularly Westerns and crime thrillers, have been more accommodating to Shakespeare's ideas, but in a writer's medium, it's natural that the greatest writer of them all has been a regular presence in science fiction one way or another. Isaac Asimov wrote an entire book on Shakespeare, as well as short story "The Immortal Bard", in which the writer is transported into the present and flunks an exam on his own work. On a similar theme, Shakespearean authorship conspiracy theories (which are after all a form of fantasy fiction in the first place) have also cropped up consistently in sci-fi contexts, with Anthony Burgess having the playwright crib his entire work from copies of his own Complete Works carried by time-travelling pilgrims.

Comics have embraced the Shakespearean canon regularly, besides the obvious allusions in Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* (the playwright turns up in person in three entries in the series, with two specifically themed around *Dream* and *The Tempest*) and Stan Lee's futuristic *Romeo And Juliet: The War* – a concept also explored in unconnected anime series *Romeo V Juliet* and even earlier cartoon *Romie-0 And Julie-8*. Then there's the concentrated Shakespearean intrigue of *Kill Shakespeare*, IDW's compact mash-up of characters from as many plays as Anthony Del Col and Conor McCreery could manage, all vying for victory in a shady world which only exists because of the power of the great man's own quill.

Ultimately, be it videogame or comic, movie or radio, the influence of a guy regularly hailed the Greatest Writer in the History of the English Language is too constant and hard-wired into geekdom to provide any exhaustive list. The references in *Star Trek* alone are endless, even before an iambic pentameter fiend like Patrick Stewart started soliloquising from the Captain's chair. A whole episode of the original *Star Trek*, "The Conscience Of The King", dripped with verse as a suspect Shakespearean thespian stands trial on the Enterprise – and *The Twilight Zone* also devoted one episode, "The Bard", to a cloned William who fails dismally to make it in modern-day show business. That fate seems an unfair presumption, given the extent to which Shakespeare has been inadvertently writing for every possible entertainment format for four long centuries – a Muse of fire, ascending the brightest heaven of invention.

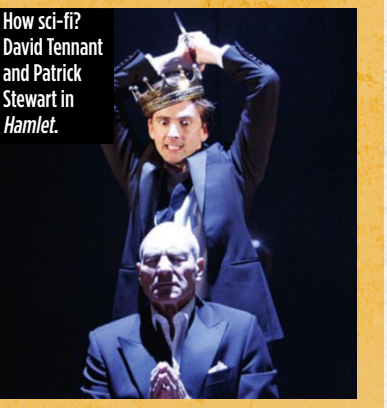
BARD DREAMS

Which plays crossover beyond this mortal realm, and how?

RICHARD III (1592)
● A sleepless Dick has plotted his way onto the throne, but finds himself haunted by his many victims on the night before his death on Bosworth field.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (1595)
● The wedding of Greek hero Theseus is magically bombed by a dispute between the King and Queen of the Fairies, in a troublesome tiff involving superhuman goblins and ass mutation.

JULIUS CAESAR (1600)
● In an echo of *Richard III*'s ghostly paranoia, poor old Brutus has only just come to terms with helping to turn Caesar into Swiss cheese, when his old boss returns to predict his death.


How sci-fi? David Tennant and Patrick Stewart in *Hamlet.*

HAMLET (1601)
● The hero may have been content to just mope around Elsinore if Shakespeare's most famous play didn't begin with an earth-cracking appearance from his dead father, barking some unpleasant truths.

MACBETH (1606)
● *Macbeth* glories in the mad devices of a trio of witches and their mistress Hecate, though whether Banquo's bloody comeback is part of their bewitching of the King or an early zombie outbreak remains uncertain.

CYMBELINE (1609)
● One of the key plot points in this Celtic history epic sees the despairing hero's dead family summon up Jupiter himself to deliver a happy ending, deus ex machina personified.

THE WINTER'S TALE (1610)
● As if the concluding sequence where Leontes' long-assumed-dead wife is brought back to life from statue form wasn't enough, Time himself delivers a lengthy speech to let the audience know that 16 years have passed.

THE TEMPEST (1611)
● Shakespeare turns topical tropical shipwreck news into a fully realised vision of an alien land far, far away, with its own mythology, races and magical laws.



THE DEAD SEA

Season two of FEAR THE WALKING DEAD is exploring watery new territory, as Richard Edwards hears from star Cliff Curtis


Travis is joined by Daniel Salazar, a man who knows his way round a razor blade.


They're going need a bigger (and better) boat.

Fear her: she's the walking dead, you know.

You didn't think zombies just had a thing for the humid Deep South, did you? Spin-off series *Fear The Walking Dead* confirmed what we'd suspected all along – that the zombie epidemic wasn't just confined to the Atlanta area, and that the dead coming back from, well, death was very much a nationwide concern.

Focusing on entirely new characters, the six episodes of *Fear The Walking Dead*'s Los Angeles-set first season ventured into territory that the parent show skipped entirely. *The Walking Dead* conveniently missed out the first weeks of the zombie outbreak, with leading man sheriff Rick Grimes in a coma, awakening to find a bleak, *28 Days Later*-ish world where civilisation had all-but-collapsed. This companion piece, meanwhile, gave us front row seats for the fall of society. What started as a minor epidemic of *extreme* flu, the odd school/business being closed, and elderly neighbours getting a bit bitey, soon descended into full-on disaster-movie territory. You know the sort of thing: martial law, the army taking their tanks to the streets, ordinary people forced to take crash courses in being Bear Grylls to survive... To the point that, by the end of season one, the outbreak is at more-or-less the point where Rick Grimes woke up in the original series. It's that world we return to in the 15-episode (seven episodes will air in this initial run, the remaining eight later in 2016) season two.

"It's actually a completely different show [this year]," says Cliff Curtis, who plays school teacher turned apocalypse survivor Travis Manawa. "The first season was the slow burn but that's over and done with now. The scale of the new season is really impressive. I'm amazed how they're really throwing it down. I think the audience is going to be very pleasantly surprised by the new take on the show. I was surprised by the direction of some of the things the writers have been coming up with for the new season. We're building on what we started – I feel that the first season was the opening act."

When we last saw *Fear The Walking Dead*'s survivors, they were holed up in a seafront mansion owned by the mysterious Strand (season one standout Colman Domingo). Travis (a pacifist by nature) had just shot dead his bitten ex-wife in front of his new fiancée, and potential salvation floats in the Pacific, in the form of Strand's boat "Abigail". Though, as anyone who's watched the parent show knows, even the most seemingly safe places can rapidly become deathtraps in *Walking Dead* creator Robert Kirkman's universe.

"I think what we'll come to realise, very quickly as we move into the first couple of episodes, is that they were not the only people with this bright idea," explains showrunner Dave Erickson. "They're not the only ones that have decided to become refugees from Los Angeles and make a break for the water. What do they do when they're confronted with the infected and what will they do when confronted with other survivors? How do they approach them and where does the greater danger lie?"

In addition to boats containing passengers both living and (un)dead, we also know that "Flight 462", the plane that's featured in an eponymous online miniseries, is somehow going to come into play – it's even been confirmed that one of the passengers will join the *Fear The Walking Dead* cast.

"I think we'll quickly realise that the ocean is no safer than land and that there's a very →


Nick (Frank Dillane) goes cold turkey this season.


Travis's girlfriend Madison (Kim Dickens) is all at sea too.

Hang on, is that a flying saucer?!


Lawrence Of Arabia 2 anyone?


Nick's presumably not in a swimming pool in Tenerife.

different level of adversity and threat," continues Erickson. "It forces the characters to set their sights on a destination. But where will that be? North to Vancouver or south to Cabo? That's the intriguing question for the first few episodes of the new season: what harbour can the characters find and when they get there, will it be safe or not?"

"I really enjoy the water," adds Curtis. "It has been challenging, but it's so worth it. I just think it brings so much new stuff to this world. It's so distinct and creates a totally new feeling for the show and the characters. I mean, the ocean itself is terrifying."

NEW FRONTIERS

"The characters don't really know where they're going and what they're doing," Curtis explains. "They're different people now. They've changed significantly. We're no longer as confused by what's going on, and we're all gearing up and getting into survival mode on a much more heightened level."

And that's been a key factor in *Fear The Walking Dead* so far. While Rick, Daryl, Carol, Glen and the rest of the survivors in the original series are by now a highly trained unit capable of bringing down pretty much any foe in seconds, the main players here are still new to the killing game – even though a few have broken their zombie-slaughtering duck.

"I was really quite shocked and surprised by some of the changes they've made to Travis!" admits Curtis. "Travis has different priorities now and he's stepping up to the plate a lot more. He's making much tougher decisions. He's much more focused than in the first season when he was holding onto his idealism and striving to be a good man all the time. He's had to rethink that. Now he has no problem with guns or with making sacrifices and just doing what needs to be done. But that's just my character – there are big changes with the others too."

"THE CREATORS ARE HAVING A BALL WITH THE SHOW"

That's not surprising considering they're all getting used to radically changed circumstances this year, whether it's Travis's drug-addict stepson Nick (Frank Dillane) ditching heroin, his son Chris (Lorenzo Henrie) who's just seen his dad shoot his mum, or their companions, the recently bereaved Salazar family – father Daniel (Rubén Blades) has some explaining to do to daughter Ofelia (Mercedes Mason) about his torture-filled past in El Salvador.

"I think the family aspect of the show is working well," says Curtis. "It feels very grounded by that. Families often don't get along, but they love each other at the same time, and I think the show is growing into that. I think that aspect is really starting to bind and work increasingly well."

They can't escape the fact, however, that life expectancies for characters in *The Walking Dead* world are typically *Game Of Thrones* low unless you're one of the chosen few. "Of course, I'd like to see Travis survive," Curtis admits. "But we get scripts shortly before we start shooting. A matter of days, actually. So we don't get a lot of time to process what's happening, and yes, that can be quite challenging. I often wish the writers would tell us more, but they don't. I'm often saying, 'I didn't see that coming'. But it always makes sense. It's not just random – it all stacks up. There have been a lot of surprises. The creators are having a ball with this show, coming up with the most difficult situations for us as characters. Our characters are facing issues morally, ethically, in terms of our humanity, in terms of what it means to be a family. It's really full on."

Fear The Walking Dead season two premieres on 11 April on AMC, exclusive to BT.

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BIRDMAN

Exclusively for *SFX*, BRIAN BLESSED recalls the making of cult '80s fave FLASH GORDON. Onward, our brave Hawkman!

I saw *Flash Gordon* as a kid, with Buster Crabbe, who was a magnificent Flash. He was an Olympic swimmer, a gold medal diver and a gold medal crawler for the American team. He was a marvellous actor – he looked a bit like Laurence Olivier. Every time he got injured or hurt he expressed pain very well. A tremendous feeling of pain. And you thought god, he's in real trouble!

I always think it's the hardest part to cast. You can take some of the most famous film stars of today – like Tom Cruise, a wonderful actor. You can put a camera on him and he's got the most perfect smile but he can look sinister. You could put the camera on [*Flash Gordon* star] Sam Jones and at any angle he'd look pure. So when Ming says to him, "Who are you?" and he says, "Flash Gordon, quarterback, New York Jets", it's so pure, his reply. As Ming says "I've never met anyone like you..."

I watched those first big serials in the cinema in Yorkshire. I was born in Mexborough. We had two cinemas and every weekend you saw *Flash Gordon*. They never cheated – he was always in trouble at the end of each half hour, and you really didn't know how he'd get out of it. And it was always very plausible, how he escaped. We gathered every week. And throughout each episode there was →



Brian signs for us at the *SFX* Weekender back in 2012.

REX (1). BRIAN'S PORTRAIT BY JOSEPH BRANSTON



WHAT'S HAPPENING, FLASH?

SAM J JONES and MELODY ANDERSON will always have Mongo



⚡ *Flash Gordon* was a huge break for you. Was there pressure on two unknowns to shoulder a blockbuster?

Melody We had no idea it was going to be a blockbuster. When you're an actor and you're starting you're just happy to get a job. There was just something very unique and special about the movie that caught people. It was the magic, the comic book colours, the characters... and of course we had such an amazing design team.

Sam I was just focused on my task at hand. Shoot this scene, now go rehearse. Go to a different location, go to a different set, go learn to use the bullwhip, go rehearse that fight scene... It just didn't stop, the machine.

Melody I had more time, and one of the things I injected into the script was that Dale was a fighter, because she's a New York City girl, right? Not only was she a fighter and a romantic but she also had this offbeat sense of humour.

⚡ Your "14 hours" line was a gift, surely?

Melody Oh yes, and meanwhile Brian Blessed's giving me pats on the butt while I'm trying to say it. So I had to laugh the whole time.

⚡ It's quite a kinky film, isn't it?

Melody If that's where your mind is. And, you know, you're over the age of nine...

⚡ There's recently been talk of a sequel to *Flash Gordon*...

Sam Matthew Reilly, the VP of production at Fox Studios, bought the rights. It's been in development at Fox for a year and a half. The reason I think it's going to come to fruition is because of his personal touch, and what it did to him – it impacted his life, along with Seth McFarlane and a lot of people. I believe it'll happen.

Nick Setchfield

KOBAL (2), REX (1)

always a background moaning, which was the strange atmosphere on Mongo. It was always threatening and sinister. It was impeccably done. It even had walking bombs in it! Anhilatons! Imagine that. Today we've got suicide bombers and they were in *Flash Gordon*.

Flash Gordon has always been the most influential thing of my youth. We all adored it. Great science fiction films were being made in the '50s but *Flash Gordon* always haunted me more than anything else. I always played Vultan when I was a little boy. I ran down the embankment and jumped over the bushes near the railway station. I never dreamt that one day I would actually play Vultan.

They said, "They're making *Flash Gordon* and they want to see you." I'd never seen the comic strip. I'd only seen the films. They produced some comic strip art for me to look at. And I looked at it and good god, it was just like looking at myself. Vultan is me! I had a beard because I'd been in *The Musketeers* for the BBC, playing Porthos, and become a character actor. I then yearned to play the part. Of course they wanted big film stars. Mike Hodges, the director, said, "Well, Porthos in *The Three Musketeers* is Vultan – Brian is Vultan!" I was offered a fee of £30,000, which back then was an enormous amount of money. I was still in the race but not guaranteed to get the part.

DEALING WITH DINO

Eventually I went to meet Dino De Laurentiis, the producer. I had a tremendous time with Dino. "I like you very much, kid!" he'd say. "I like your smile, I like everything about you!" Dino and I immediately had the most bizarre relationship. People were terrified of Dino De Laurentiis. He was so powerful that people trembled and never faced him. He was a kind of warlord. Astonishing. But I immediately said, "If you don't cast me in this I'm going to break your jaw!" And he laughed and said, "Okay, you're gonna break-a my jaw!" So we always had this kind of extraordinary, confrontational but warm relationship. He said, "I want you to play it, kid," and that was it. I was in heaven.

It was a marvellous cast. Max Von Sydow and Peter Wyngarde and Timothy Dalton and Topol and Melody and Ornella and all of them... And lots of dwarves. Everybody seemed to be in it. So I raced to the studio. I just couldn't get there quickly enough. And I knew exactly how to play him, and what to do with him, and what the style was. He was a flying Viking, you might say. Thor, almost. I found the whole thing madly, wonderfully exciting.

Dino would always come into the studio, and if he came into the studio while we were filming everything went wrong, because they were all terrified of him. Even Mike Hodges went red in the face. I was flying one day as



THE FIRST VULTAN

⚡ Brian Blessed may own the role but he wasn't the first actor to play the roaring ruler of the Hawkmen. Jack "Tiny" Lipson was the screen's original Vultan, starring alongside Buster Crabbe in 1936's cliffhanging serial *Flash Gordon*. A burly, outsized cinematic presence – yes, the nickname was ironic – Lipson worked with such comedy legends as WC Fields, Laurel and Hardy and the Three Stooges, frequently cast as a stooge or a heavy. King Vultan was a rare named credit for a man more usually credited as Fat Guest, Fat Bank Guard or Big Man At Bazaar. He died in 1947, aged 46.





Saved every one of us: Flash and Vultan.

Dino came in. It was all going wrong. Two thousand of us trying to fly! "Please," I cried. "Bugger off, Dino! We can't work! It's going to cost money! BUGGER OFF, DINO!" And he just laughed and said, "Hee-hee, the kid tells me to bugger off... no one talks to me like this!"

I was in this film called *Man Of La Mancha*, playing the villain, with Peter O'Toole. And a lot of it was filmed in the Dino De Laurentiis studios. This was before *Flash Gordon*. I remember all the actors were sitting around the studios on a big lawn. It was Dino's favourite lawn. And he sent his man down to order all the actors to get off it. We'd been suffering with the heat inside, in these dungeons. I remained there, in the middle of his favourite lawn. And O'Toole said to Dino, "Blessed won't move. He won't do as you tell him." And Dino always remembered that. "You wouldn't move, would you, kid? I like that!"

The first six weeks on *Flash Gordon* we were filming scenes in Ming's palace, so everybody was there. Max Von Sydow came up to me. He'd done all those wonderful films with Bergman, particularly *The Seventh Seal*. He said, "I'm very pleased to meet you. You've done Shakespeare parts. I've seen you." And then he said, "I must confess I'm about to make my entrance and I don't know how to play him." Now I felt certain about everything. I wasn't vulnerable at all. So I said, "Well, I saw you in *The Quiller Memorandum*, interrogating George Segal. You had blond hair and you were a German and you kept cracking your fingers. You acted from your fingers." I said, "Ming is a wizard, and uses his hands for his power. He's a wizard and he's a sex fiend. He has sex potions. He has his own harem. He's all hands!" And Max said, "That's it, Brian!" So when you watch the film, you'll see that he uses his hands a lot. So I rather credit myself with the fact that I gave him this note! A wonderful actor.



And normally he's so shy and retiring.

> "The Prime Minister took me in to see the British Cabinet. I stood on a chair and said, 'Gordon's alive!'"

Wherever I go in the world I have to say "Gordon's alive!" I was halfway up Kilimanjaro and there was a Masai warrior. He said, "It's him! Can you say 'Gordon's alive!'?" So I said "Gordon's alive!" to a Masai warrior, halfway up this great mountain... I was on this British expedition and this Typhoon submarine came up. All these sailors got out and said, "It's him! It's him! Say 'Gordon's alive!'" I can't walk down the street because everyone wants me to say it. It's a celebration of freedom, in a way. A short while ago I was at Number 10, doing something about elephants. And so there's the Prime Minister. He took me into a room and there was the British Cabinet. I stood on a chair and said, "Gordon's alive!" Wherever I go – people dying in their bed. "Can you just say 'Gordon's alive?'" I've said it for the Queen!

Flash Gordon has become more and more of a cult movie, much more than Dino ever anticipated. When there's criticism and people say it's camp, I can't accept that. I think the film is perfect. They mustn't make a remake. It has a comic strip style, and that's what's good about it. It moves apace and it's full of variety. Fellini's great set designer does the sets and the music by Queen is beatific. The scene in the rocket, when they set off and fall asleep, that beautiful romantic music... And the skies are purple and green, not black like they were in *Star Wars*. The whole thing has been a miracle.

As told to Nick Setchfield. With thanks to Lisa Downs. www.lifeafterflash.com

Brought THE SFX AUTHOR INTERVIEW To Book

KEN MACLEOD

The Scot on his new space opera and his late friend Iain M Banks

Words by Jonathan Wright /// Photography by Joby Sessions

When Ken MacLeod was last suggesting ideas to his longtime publishers, Orbit, he outlined a number of scenarios for novels. All of these were for books he'd "thought out very carefully". Well, aside from one mad notion. "At the last minute this idea of a robots'-eye view of a robot revolt, in space, came to me and I hacked it on at the end," he says, "and this was the one my publisher was excited about."

Ain't that always the way. More seriously, as he goes on to describe his ideas for *The Corporation Wars: Dissidence*, the first part of his *Second Law* trilogy, you can see why Orbit's editors might have been enthused. After several years of mixing SF with other genres, MacLeod has gone back to imagining distant vistas. Without in any way dissing novels such as *Intrusion* and *Descent*, it's fascinating to see MacLeod, a key figure in the 1980s/1990s Brit space opera boom, re-engaging with hard SF.

In *Dissidence*, it's not humanity that trailblazes a path to the stars. Instead, MacLeod foresees a future where big corporations send robots to work on promising-looking exo-planets. "What happens is that because of various unforeseen contingencies, some of these exploratory robots become self-aware and boot up into consciousness, and start doing their own thing," says MacLeod.

Needless to say, this isn't supposed to happen, but the world government, The Direction, has a plan in place for this contingency: "to use the uploaded 'brain-states' of various disreputable characters", former soldiers from a bitter war fought in the late 21st century, to re-establish control.

BIT OF POLITICS

So it is that we see one of these troops, Carlos the Terrorist, waking up in "a rather old-fashioned space colony in a golden age universe". It's all too good to be true; this is a training simulation virtual reality, and Carlos soon learns his personality is to be downloaded into the body of a combat robot. "[Carlos and his co-fighters'] robot bodies and minds are optimised," says MacLeod. "A question that runs through the book is whether they prefer to be robots rather than virtual human beings inside simulations. And, after that... it all gets very complicated."

In truth, things often do get complicated in MacLeod's novels, usually because of that most recurring of his themes, politics. *Dissidence* is no different. The conflicts in this future are in part down to ongoing disagreements between factions once called the Acceleration and the Reaction. Throw in the question of whether the robots ("by far the [book's] most sympathetic characters") should be free, and you have a rich stew.

Not that MacLeod's interest in politics is always wholly helpful. MacLeod has been busy of late in part because he "got a bit caught up in the agitation around the Scottish referendum" rather than writing novels. "I was mainly concerned with how a large part of the Scottish left seemed to think that independence was the *answer*, or part of the answer, and I still don't," he says.

He's intrigued by the ascent of Jeremy Corbyn and Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell to the leadership of the Labour Party, but rejects the idea they're men of the hard left. "What they are is a principled left, and that's actually quite a difficult challenge for them," he says. "Corbyn and McDonnell et al have a very difficult challenge to take on because they're essentially leading a party where most of the MPs are not in the same frame of mind at all."

But there won't be too many blog posts about this. "I'm resisting getting stuck into that," he adds, "because I know all too well that as a writer politics can be a time sink, especially if you take online stuff seriously."

POETRY EMOTION

MacLeod also took time to help edit and promote *Poems* (2015), a book that gathered up Iain M Banks' verse, along with poems by MacLeod himself. It's a final act in a creative partnership that dates back to a childhood friendship. Famously, as long ago as the mid-1970s, Banks outlined the entire plot of *Against A Dark Background* to MacLeod as the latter helped out with chores at home. It was, MacLeod says, "very touching" to see how much interest the poems garnered. "[The book] does give an insight into how Iain thought and how he felt and so on," says MacLeod. "If you're interested in his writing at all, they're worth reading."

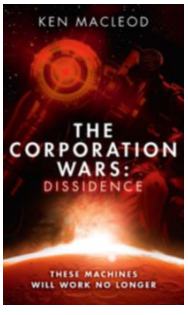
What do they give us the novels don't? "I suppose there's a kind of laying bare in a more intimate view," says MacLeod. "When you're writing fiction, some of your ideas and worldview and attitudes come through, and they certainly do in Iain's books, but poetry comes a bit closer to the bone."

He still misses Banks deeply. "I miss him [especially] in the sense that I still catch myself thinking, 'That's something Iain would like,'" he says. "It came most strongly when I was reading his last novel, *The Quarry*, and every so often I'd find myself chuckling at something and catch myself thinking, 'I must mention how much I enjoyed that.'"

The Corporation Wars: Dissidence will be published by Orbit on 12 May.

Biodata

Occupation
→ Novelist
Born
→ 2 August 1954, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis
From
→ South Queensferry
Greatest Hits
→ MacLeod has twice won the BSFA Award for best novel, for *The Sky Road* (1999) and *The Night Sessions* (2008).
Random Fact
→ Cory Doctorow borrowed the idea of a programmers' union, the Information Workers of the World Wide Web, or the Webblies, in *For The Win* (2010) from MacLeod.

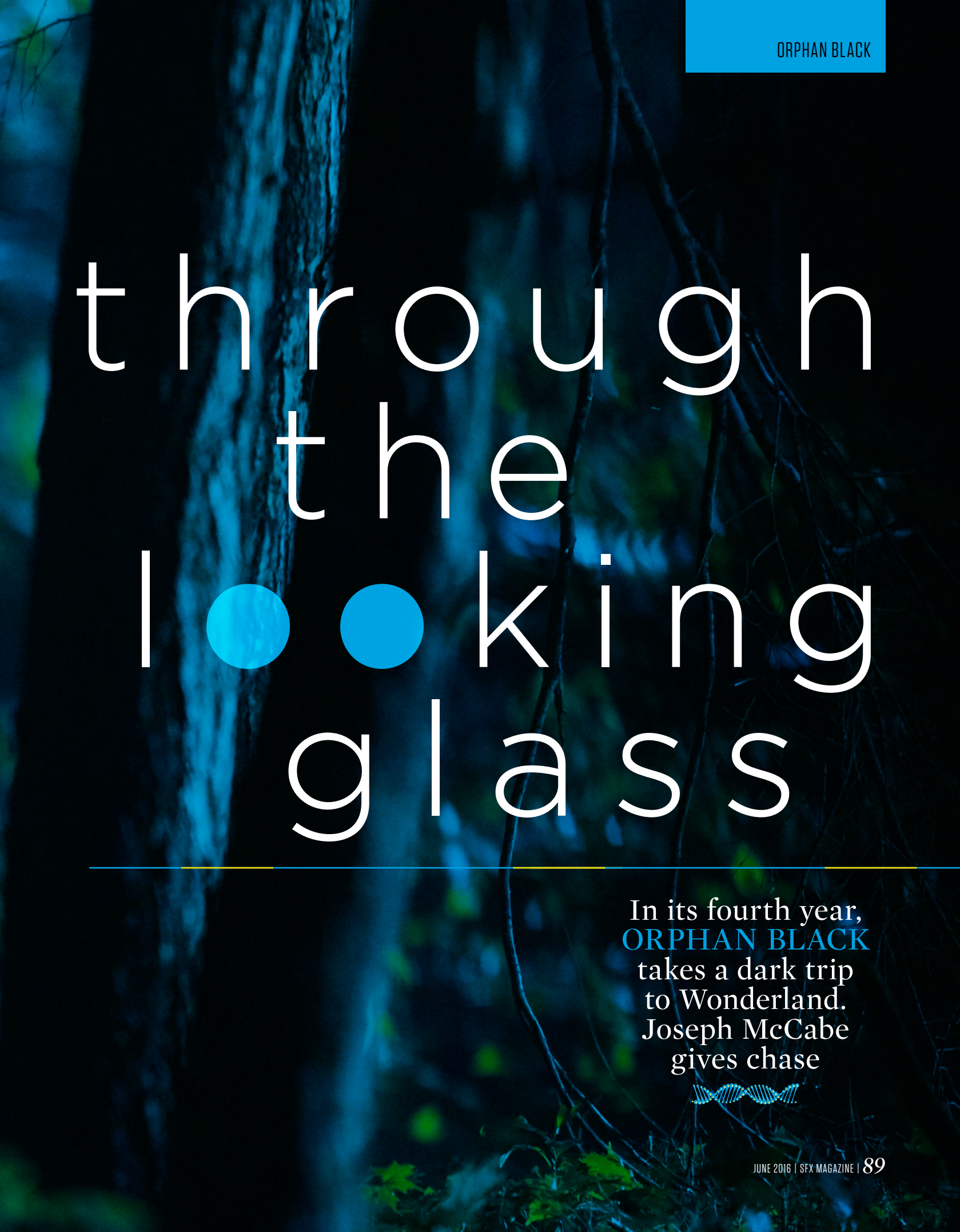


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"I KNOW ALL TOO WELL THAT AS A WRITER POLITICS CAN BE A TIME SINK"





through the looking glass

In its fourth year, ORPHAN BLACK takes a dark trip to Wonderland. Joseph McCabe gives chase


Cosima, Sarah and Scott: like to watch.

It's fitting that the ads for the fourth season of *Orphan Black* have chosen to reference Lewis Carroll – and not only because the author's most famous book just celebrated its 150th anniversary. Just like Alice, Sarah Manning and her clone "seestras" – all of whom are played by the preternaturally gifted Tatiana Maslany – have, in the last few years, found themselves thrown down a rabbit hole filled with conspiracies and cutting-edge technologies as they've sought to unravel the mystery of how and why they came to be. This year, however, their journey leads them to where it began.

"It's a pretty balls-to-the-wall trip," executive producer Graeme Manson tells *SFX*. With only seven days left in the shooting of season four's finale, the show's co-creator is tired but upbeat.

"We really thought a lot about this season at the end of last year and the beginning of this year. We decided to go back to the beginning. We really wanted to take it back to the opening of the whole series, and that fateful moment on the train platform with Beth. We always thought there was more going on there than met the eye, that it would be fun to go back and see what else was going on in Beth's life."

Fans can expect to learn more of the late character's world through both flashbacks and the show's present story. "It's fair to say a little bit of both. I think we will get a chance to see Beth. We have seen her before. But the exact sort of narrative way that she shows up is really part of the surprise this season."

sheep's clothing

To the delight of Clone Club fans everywhere, Beth's mysteries have resulted in yet another new character for Maslany to portray.

"Of course we don't want to give too much away," laughs Manson. "But it's safe to say we discovered this new clone was someone attached to Beth, or that Beth knew. So there's sort of a window into the past. A new ally, the one who shows up in the sheep mask."

That mask, it turns out, is more than just a bit of surrealism...

"The whole concept of a clone wearing a mask was, we thought, interesting. It's getting kind of meta. So we were like, 'What kind of mask? Is it an Anonymous type thing?' When we happened on the sheep it really struck a chord with me, because it's speaking about clones, talking about Dolly the sheep, even if we don't approach it too directly. I like what it said about that. And it's kind of creepy too."

Expect that creepiness to be continued throughout season four, which Manson describes as darker than years past.

"I think we get to some really interesting places. I think we take Sarah to a place as dark as she's ever been. But it's something that she has to do to gather her sisters together, to bring them together, and sort of come from slaughter, which I think that this season really does in spades. Now that we're near the end it really feels like they've been through a tremendous journey. Sarah had to go to those dark places for the sake of her sisters. And they all go to dark places – Allison, Cosima and Sarah all got to go to the dark side to get through it this year."

Contributing to season four's darkness is new character Evie Cho (played by Jessalyn Wanlim), who may or may not aid Cosima in her ongoing health scare.


Helena's pregnancy is more complicated than most.

"She's an interesting character who shows up as probably a new, improved Dr Leekie character, very much an antagonist for Sarah and her sisters. The science she's doing is very cutting edge, very interesting, very much along the lines of gene-editing technology. So it's an interesting element of the science that she brings to it, and a new element as well...

the top 5 deadly doppelgangers!

Not all of Sarah Manning's sisters are benevolent. (Hello, Rachel!) But she's not alone in dealing with duplicitous doubles...

vampire willow



→ *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*'s bestie took a trip to the goth side in two memorable episodes that foreshadowed her Big Bad turn in the show's sixth season, and resulted in her signature catchphrase "Bored now."

mirror spock



→ Forever cementing an evil twin's trademarks as dark goatee and 'tache, the Mirror Universe's Spock was ultimately convinced by our own universe's Captain Kirk that wickedness was illogical.

bizarro



→ The Man of Steel's imperfect duplicate has threatened Metropolis countless times since his first appearance in 1958. But he's often defeated through the one feeling he shares with Superman — an attraction to Lois Lane.

katherine pierce



→ *The Vampire Diaries*' greatest villain through its early seasons was Elena's much less inhibited undead ringer, responsible for turning her boyfriends, Stefan and Damon Salvatore, into vamp heartthrobs.

KARR



→ Sure, Michael Knight himself was honoured with an evil twin brother in '80s cheesefest *Knight Rider*, but his car KITT got the cooler dark double in KARR, voiced by auto-acting expert Peter Cullen, aka *Transformers*'s Optimus Prime.



You can try, but you can't keep Sarah down.



Rachel's not off to see a 3D film.

"The mystery of Kira is the human side of all the clones"

Alliances are always hard to come by in our show, but Cosima is definitely heavily invested in her own science. We know how good she is, how smart she is. But we found our original last year. So when we last left them we had the material to theoretically create a gene therapy for Cosima. I think she's got the smarts. But do we have the resources? Surely along the way she's gonna need some scientific allies to get through this. I'm not sure if that's gonna be Evie Cho or not."

Manson is quick to point out that real science fuels *Orphan Black*'s fiction.

"CRSPR gene-editing technology is very interesting. People are seeing how key this science is, this kind of gene-editing technology for the germ-line editing, where you're actually affecting the genome of offspring and not the person, not the parents. These things are akin to nuclear fusion in the 20th century. They're that big. They're things that have the ability to create something brand new and unforeseen, as well as the capability of being terribly destructive... I saw some articles just the other day in which scientists impregnated a mouse embryo with synthetic male mouse sperm. That was interesting... In terms of the show this year, germ-line editing, gene editing, and CRSPR technology were certainly on our minds and at the forefront of what our science consultant Cosima Herter was having the writers' room consider and look at."

As for the show's other cast additions, the producer says, "We're going to dabble in a couple of other new characters that we've seen in the past. I don't think it's too much of a spoiler to say we're excited to see Krystal back again at some point this season. She's a pretty fun character. So, more clone hijinks!"

one for all

Maslany, explains Manson, played an integral role in developing the show's latest clone.

"When we start to come up with a concept of a new clone we get her involved in the process of that really quickly. So as soon as we have a new clone and we have a story function for that clone we'll go to Tatiana and say, 'These are some of the elements that we're working with. How does she fit into your palette of characters in your mind?' We'll have a number of conversations from there that then expand into experimenting with hair and make-up, and getting her into hair, make-up and wardrobe so that she can start to feel the character, embody the character, find that physicality of the characters that she's so good at. A new clone is pretty great to see on screen. But it's also a lot of fun for us to come up with these characters and make sure they're distinct and complementary or clashing or whatever we need. It's not a new clone each episode, so we take our time in developing these characters. They have story function and they have some real juice when it comes to adding to the world and adding to this cast of clone characters that Tat plays."

Orphan Black's biggest mystery will continue to be its smallest character – Kira. While more will be learned about Sarah's daughter this year, Manson tells us she'll continue to represent an enigma that's best left unexplained.

"The most interesting thing to me about Kira has always been that the mysterious side of her is the most human side of her. I think that she is in effect sort of a little empath, if you know what I mean. The fact that she's Sarah's daughter and occasionally has sort of a connection to her mother, to her mother's sisters. I think that that's a very human thing. You don't want to get too close. I don't want to pick apart and give a scientific reason for why Kira is empathetic. I don't think science can decipher empathy. All of that is to say I don't know what kind of answer people want from Kira – the mystery of Kira is the human side of all of the clones."

Now that the show is in its fourth season, many may wonder how long their beloved Clone Club will continue. Manson says that the story is now in its middle years.

"It feels like we're getting closer to the end. We've known where the story is going, and we've been stretching out the middle of the story I guess. It feels like we're getting closer to where we can sort of slide into what we see as the end of the story. But I think that it could be a couple more seasons until we get to that."

Until then, expect the journey through the rabbit hole to grow curiouser and curiouser.

Orphan Black returns to Space in Canada and BBC America in April. UK broadcast TBC.

UFO

Gerry Anderson leaves the puppets behind for live-action thrills – Stephen La Rivière recalls the long SHADO of *UFO*



Time Machine
THE STORY BEHIND THE SCI-FI & FANTASY OF YESTERYEAR
1970



There's even time on the Moon for a sitdown.



That's a good telly on the wall.

"**Cancel the series, Gerry! They'll never** understand it in America."

It was an abrupt end to an empire. For a decade Gerry Anderson had been at the helm of a series of successful puppet shows which he had dreamt up with his wife Sylvia. In 1957 he and his team found themselves having to take on a low-budget series with primitive papier mâché marionettes. By the end of the '60s their never-ending hard work, research and development had produced sophisticated miniature superstars who were known throughout the world. However, when television mogul Lew Grade witnessed the first episode of Gerry and Sylvia's latest idea, *The Secret Service* – a whimsical, peculiar series in which entertainer Stanley Unwin played a gobbledygook-speaking secret agent priest (!) – he saw that time was up for the marionettes.

It was a blow to the crew of Century 21 Productions. The puppeteers were given their notice, and the puppets were evicted from their homes into the skip.

Gerry and Sylvia shed no tears.

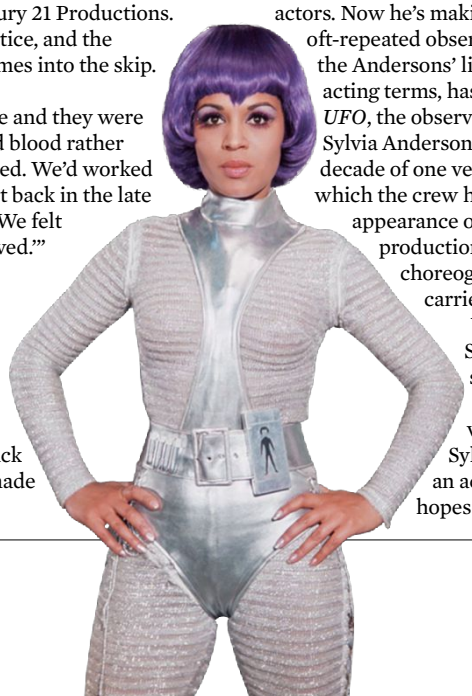
Finally their dream had come true and they were able to work with actors of flesh and blood rather than fibreglass. "We were very excited. We'd worked for this," says Sylvia. "We didn't start back in the late '50s wanting to make puppet films. We felt now, 'At last! We're here. We've arrived.'"

The genesis of *UFO* – which Gerry and Sylvia then considered to be their first respectable piece of filmmaking – can be traced back to 1967 when medical history was made with the world's first human heart transplant. This planted the germ of an idea in Gerry's mind, as he explained in 2007: "*UFO* dealt with aliens who were landing on Earth. Doctor Barnard had just carried out the first heart transplant. So I thought, 'Well, that's what they're coming to Earth for – to steal organs.' At that time people thought the heart was like the soul, not just a pump. We all wondered what would happen if you changed one person's heart with another. Maybe their whole personality was going to change."

Gerry continued: "So the aliens were invading for organs. Well, that had to be dealt with. So there was an organisation called SHADO. They had a base on the Moon with interceptor spacecraft that could intercept incoming UFOs long before they reached Earth. And they had a base on Earth that controlled the whole operation. It had to be secret – so I set that base under a film studio."

"Gerry Anderson spent years making puppets look like actors. Now he's making actors look like puppets!" – an oft-repeated observation made by lazy hacks about the Andersons' live-action shows. It's a slight that, in acting terms, has no basis in reality. However, with *UFO*, the observation isn't totally without merit as Sylvia Anderson is happy to acknowledge. After a decade of one very specific type of filmmaking, in which the crew had total control over the appearance of every single aspect of the production, it's unsurprising that this choreography of design and fashion carried on over.

When it came to casting their lead, Sylvia looked back to her earlier series *Captain Scarlet* and cast actor Ed Bishop who had provided the voice of Captain Blue. Gerry and Sylvia were taken with his abilities as an actor (Gerry often said that he had hopes that Ed would become a big →



© REX (4)


If anyone could pull off the purple wig look it was Gabrielle Drake.

> “I thought, ‘It’s amazing! They speak. And their mouth is in sync with their words’”

movie star), but Sylvia felt he needed a little polishing. “Ed wasn’t the way he seems on screen. I thought, ‘Yeah, he’s got the right voice. But we’ll have to do something about his looks.’ So that’s when I went to the wig makers and got him a blond wig. Then we put some tan make-up on him which brought out his eyes. He had a good figure so we put him in the futuristic outfits and there he was. I knew he was a good actor and made him into the image of a puppet!”

Sylvia was also, unsurprisingly, responsible for perhaps one of the best-remembered elements of the series: the Moonbase girls in purple wigs and form-fitting silver suits. Sylvia notes that these outlandish ideas weren’t just born out of the ’60s being a time of experimentation, but that she was actively looking for ways to make her shows different to anything else.

“I thought, ‘Let’s do a purple wig!’ I remember coming to the studio and sitting with a purple wig on in the office. No one took any notice! I thought, ‘Why aren’t they saying something!?’ They were probably used to me doing crazy things like that! But I did some tests and I realised that it was going to work really well.”

SATELLITE TV

Let’s ask for the Moon...

→ Gerry Anderson wanted *UFO* to be as realistic as possible, especially when it came to the depiction of the Moon. NASA supplied photographic reference, which the special effects team set about replicating in miniature. Anderson circulated a memo to the production team explaining in detail about conditions on the lunar surface and how it should be depicted on screen. In July 1969 the crew held its breath and awaited the first pictures from the Moon landing. Would their effects live up to reality? Most of the team breathed a sigh of relief. But Anderson, ever the perfectionist, lamented: “I wish we’d filmed the scenes in slow motion to simulate low gravity.”


Now that’s just too easy.


That ’70s Sea Devil stringy vest look got everywhere!


Neil Armstrong a distant memory...

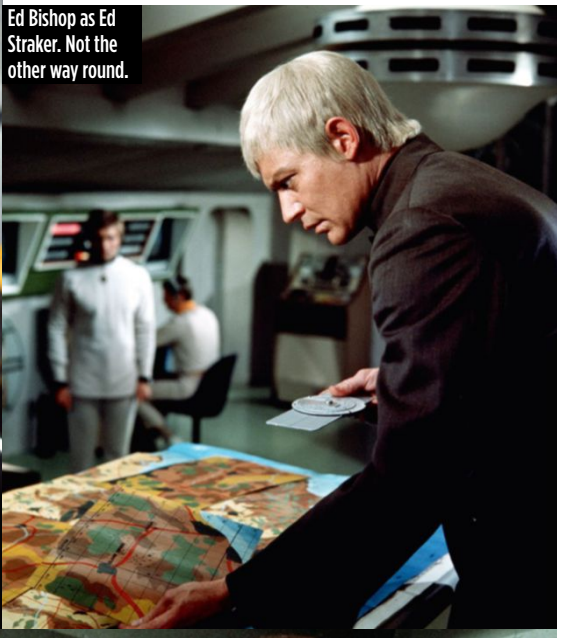
Shooting commenced at Elstree during 1969. Gerry remembered the beginnings of the series vividly. “I thought, ‘It’s amazing! They speak. And their mouth is in sync with their words. And they can walk. Boy, this is going to be absolutely fabulous!’” However, the series faced numerous teething troubles, most notable of which was the casting and re-casting of Franco De Rosa as the Moonbase Controller. While the Andersons favoured finding actors that fitted the image they wanted rather than using established stars, in this instance casting a temperamental actor with a less than native command of English was to be their undoing. Thinking on their feet – and with the need to keep the cameras rolling – they promoted actress Gabrielle Drake who played new character Gay Ellis.

Gerry showed great loyalty to his team. Although there was no place for puppeteers on his new show, many of the old crew were brought across to Elstree where most of Lew Grade’s glossy ITC series were pumped out at enormous speed. It was a baptism of fire for the young directors who had only ever worked with the puppets. “It used to terrify me,” remembers director David Lane. “On the way to studio I used to have a little spot where I would stop and throw up.”

The situation was less traumatic on the special effects stages, which remained at Century 21’s Slough studios. “We knew we had fantastic special effects. So that would be the linchpin of the whole thing,” says Sylvia. Special effects maestro Derek Meddings – soon to find employment on a whole slew of big-hitting feature films – oversaw the unit. Repeating a successful formula going back to *Thunderbirds*, *UFO* featured several “star” super-vehicles including Skydiver, the Moonbase

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Ed Bishop as Ed Straker. Not the other way round.



At least aliens would be greeted by very well-dressed humans.

Interceptors and the eponymous UFOs. "Those damned flying saucers!" Meddings exclaimed on more than one occasion when remembering the frustration of getting the models to a) spin, b) fly, and c) do so without generating numerous light reflections.

Five completed effects shots were expected a day – and no one knew if the footage was okay until the following one when rushes came in. As Brian Johnson recalled of the department: "It was our biggest problem. Do we strike the sets and move onto the next shot? Or hold out until we knew if we'd got it right?" The team had little to worry about – their effects remain among some of the best miniature work ever done for television.

UFO is an interesting, if inconsistent series. It certainly doesn't hit the ground running and over the course of its initial 17 episodes explores and plays with different adult themes. Part of this is down to the Andersons who were in a bid to free themselves from their image as children's entertainers. As a result, UK broadcasters seemed uncertain how to schedule the series, and indeed found themselves relegating certain episodes from later in the run to post-watershed slots. The American distributors also brought a disproportionate amount of influence to bear. Unable to see the possibilities for a science fiction series to deal with grown-up drama, the execs asked Gerry to reduce what they saw as the more soapy elements of the show. They also demanded the loss of respected actor George Sewell. His pock-marked visage wasn't perfect enough for their audiences.

The final nine episodes, which were shot at Pinewood, see the series starting to find its feet, albeit it in a slightly more surreal direction than perhaps had been initially intended; more than one episode skates around the issues of hallucinogenic drugs, then a big source of debate.

The show seemed to be going from strength to strength, and viewing figures from America were extremely favourable. As a result, a second series was swiftly ordered, and Gerry and Sylvia found themselves with an offer to make a Bond film. Television is a fickle business though, and when after several weeks the ratings in America started to drop the axe was brought down. Already into pre-production on a second series, Gerry swiftly proposed reworking the concept in a new show. The idea – *Space: 1999* – was commissioned, and *UFO* joined its puppet predecessors on the scrap heap. Home entertainment releases and numerous repeats have allowed the series to enjoy an extended life and followers of the show have often lamented that the programme was cut down at the point it was hitting its stride.

As Ed Bishop noted in 1995, though, stardom is often brief. "I went back to New York after the series. I'm a very good DIY man. So I started to do decorating in New York to help supplement myself. I went up to Brooklyn and a family had a kitchen they wanted wallpapered. I said, 'Okay, fine.' Started about 10am and at 10pm I heard [hums *UFO* tune]. I thought, 'I know that music!' So I peeked through the door and the family was sitting there watching *UFO*. And here was me, out there in the kitchen, wallpapering.

"That's show business!"

LAUNCH INTERCEPTORS!

UFO's unmistakable missile-loaded design classic

→ Although the Andersons were in pursuit of making more sophisticated films, they were still happy to pursue kids' merchandising. One of the best-remembered toys from the series was the Dinky Moonbase Interceptor. Mike Trim recalls the vehicle's design: "I wanted to give them a factory-built appearance and to look uniform. I saw a script that said, 'The Interceptor fires its missile and turns away.' I thought, 'If there's only one missile it's going to have to be fairly sizeable and impressive. I put the missile at the front of a small cockpit. The motor was at the end and the whole thing sat on landing legs. This time, Derek didn't like what I'd done. He kept the missiles and the legs, but streamlined the whole design."



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JUNE 2016

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edited by Ian Berriman

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When Harry Met Silly

Highlights



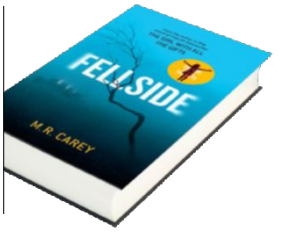
98 10 CLOVERFIELD LANE

→ The *Cloverfield* sequel that's not *really* a sequel.



100 MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

→ A father and son run from a cult who believe the boy has special powers.



112 FELLSIDE

→ A women's prison is the subject of a haunting in MR Carey's latest.

→ RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ SUPERB ★★★★☆ GOOD ★★★☆☆ AVERAGE ★★☆☆☆ POOR ★☆☆☆☆ TERRIBLE

10 CLOVERFIELD LANE

Bunker mentality

★★★★☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

12A | 105 minutes

Director **Dan Trachtenberg**

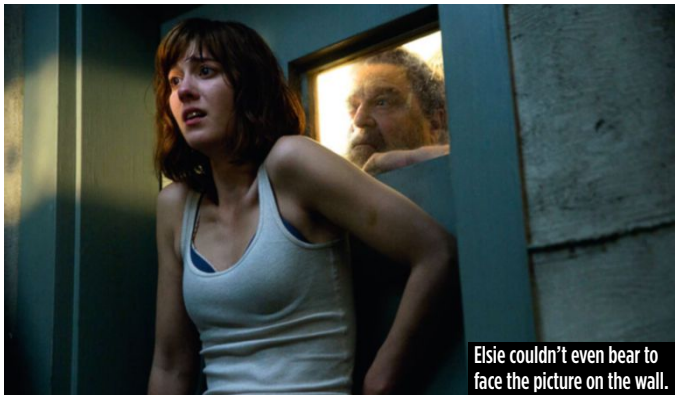
Cast **John Goodman, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, John Gallagher Jr**

"You've got some fight in you," creepy Howard (John Goodman) says to Mary Elizabeth Winstead's plucky Michelle, inadvertently making the understatement of the year. "I can respect that." Howard's describing Michelle's reaction to her current predicament, but he could be outlining *10 Cloverfield Lane*'s production history. It's very much the little film that could.

Conceived as a micro-budget potboiler, it uses (for the most part) a single set and a (very) low cast count. The opening acts save as much cash as possible, before the filmmakers drop a stack of third-act surprises that are much more impressive than they would've been if they'd stuck to the original plan. It's a trick several indie films have successfully pulled off, but which hasn't generally been utilised for larger blockbusters. As a result, *10 Cloverfield Lane* feels like the biggest budget low-budget film ever made – and a major reason for that production value is the title.

For those who don't know the backstory: *Lane* originally didn't have anything to do with Matt Reeves/Drew Goddard/JJ Abrams's found-footage monster movie masterpiece at all. After a script titled *The Cellar* was picked up by Paramount, it found its way into Abrams's inbox, and the producer agreed to slap *Cloverfield* on the cover, calling it a "blood relative" to Reeves's movie. With Abrams attached, applying the same stealth marketing *Cloverfield* cleverly utilised in 2008, and allowing the ad-cutters to play up the *Cloverfield* angle, you'd be forgiven for thinking that this is a direct sequel.

But such a description would be a tiny bit deceptive. If *Cloverfield* was *Godzilla* on the streets, *10 Cloverfield Lane* is more like *The Mist* in a bunker. Like Frank Darabont's film, it uses an extreme situation to create claustrophobic, paranoid tension, with humans the real monsters you have to look out for. Where *Cloverfield* put lightly sketched characters into extreme peril, shoving them from one action setpiece to another like they were being guided around a theme park, Dan Trachtenberg's camera is far more focused on his cast's faces; their inner demons.



Elsie couldn't even bear to face the picture on the wall.



That's the trouble with putting an erotic lithograph on the ceiling.

It makes for a mesmerising watch. The performances are uniformly excellent, with Mary Elizabeth Winstead a stand-out. The story follows her journey from fiancé-ditching runaway to bunker-based prisoner (after Howard "rescues" her, keeping her captive for her own good, and explaining that a chemical attack has rendered the air outside deadly), to, well, *spoilers*.

> "Feels like the biggest low-budget film ever made"

This really is the best we've seen from Winstead, making a Rey-level resourceful heroine empathetic and believable. Props also to John Goodman for adding layers to a potentially pantomime survival



obsessive, with his highlight moment involving one of the tensest boardgames since Monopoly round the Milibands', Christmas 2010.

It's a brilliantly written scene, typical of the script in general, which contains plenty of twists and some of the most solid internal character logic we've seen for a long time. Well, until we get to the third act, and a couple of videogame-style narrative short cuts that feel too much like cheats to be truly satisfying.

Speaking of that ending, the film's final revelations will surely prove divisive. This is more like an episode of the '90s reboot of *The Outer Limits* than a true follow-up to *Cloverfield*. In fact, remove the early Slusho reference that places it in JJ's universe (it's before the credits, eagle-eyed Easter Egg hunters) and you'd be hard-pressed to find any links to that film at all. If this is the start of a series of "Cloverfield Presents"-style flicks in which different characters are reacting to very different events during a specific time period, then we'll buy it as a concept. But if this really is the only *Cloverfield* sequel we're going to get then it feels like fans of the original are being short-changed.

Still, the film's fine performances and comparatively complex script mean it shouldn't be dismissed, and if putting *Cloverfield* on the poster means more people sit down to watch it, then more power to the filmmakers. Let's hope audiences aren't too disappointed with what they find; it would be a shame if subverted expectations hurt a film that deserves respect. **Sam Ashurst**

i *10 Cloverfield Lane*'s production was kept so secret that Winstead still didn't know the official title hours before the trailer reveal.

NO WAY OUT

Four more tightly-contained tales of terror



NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

Setting a template copied by countless zombie movies since, George Romero's 1968 classic traps its characters in a farmhouse for most of the duration, surrounded by flesh-eating ghouls.

THE THING

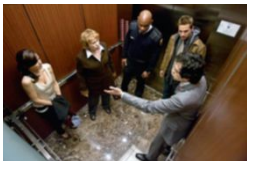
There's no escape from the shapeshifting parasitic alien that's invaded an Antarctic scientific research station in John Carpenter's 1982 horror – or, indeed, from the blood-hungry "intellectual carrot" in 1951 predecessor *The Thing From Another World*.

THE MIST

Based on Stephen King's 2007 novel, Frank Darabont's film sees a bunch of Maine folk barricading themselves inside a grocery store after horrific giant insects emerge from a doorway into another dimension.

DEVIL

You can't get a much more claustrophobic location than the one in this 2010 film, based on a story by M Night Shyamalan. Five strangers are trapped in a lift, dying one by one as the lights go out. One of them is the devil – but which?



MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

Alton Powers

★★★★☆

RELEASED 15 APRIL

12A | 112 minutes

Director **Jeff Nichols**

Cast **Michael Shannon, Joel Edgerton, Kirsten Dunst, Adam Driver**

"What's Kryptonite?" asks boy-on-the-run Alton (Jaeden Lieberher), freshly rescued from a religious cult who believe he has mysterious powers by dad Roy (Michael Shannon) and Roy's friend Lucas (Joel Edgerton). Lucas has given Alton a fistful of superhero comics to read in the back of their escape vehicle, and it's clear Superman is his favourite. Roy grimaces, chastising Lucas for giving them to Alton in the first place: "He needs to know what's real."

That's about as clear a mission statement as you could get for Jeff Nichols' fourth film, a superhero flick in all but name. If M Night Shyamalan's similarly-toned *Unbreakable* was the first entry in a shared universe, *Midnight Special* would be its *Winter Soldier*. It's solemn, tense, with a cynical eye on governmental control – there are plenty of parallels. But there are also differences. *Midnight Special* is so grounded in the real world that its exposition-spouting cameo doesn't come from an Arnim Zola equivalent, but from Fox News rantbot Nancy Grace (one's on a computer screen, one's on a TV screen. One has questionable political views, one's... Actually, we'll just leave it there).

It has serious points to make about religious obsession, living in a weaponised society and, most significantly, freedom. The opening image – a piece of tape covering up a hotel-door peephole – might seem throwaway, but it's a neat visual metaphor for the film's key theme: hiding might stop people from seeing you, but it also stops you from receiving information. Eventually, you have to let the light in.

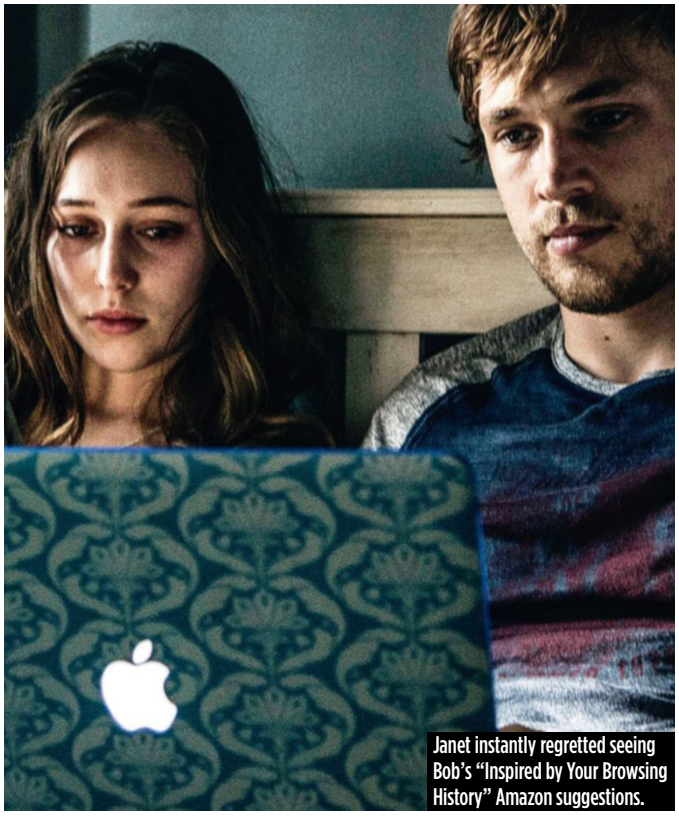


Well, *that* scared the hitchhiker off.

Packed with powerful performances and setpieces that are little short of awe-inspiring (brace yourself for the meteor storm), with a layered script filled with subtle foreshadowing, it's a rewarding watch.

As for that early question? Ex-Zod Shannon doesn't answer. Perhaps because he knows *Midnight Special* has no relevant weaknesses. **Sam Ashurst**

i Adam Driver's first day on set was the day he got the news he'd be playing Kylo Ren in *The Force Awakens*.



Janet instantly regretted seeing Bob's "Inspired by Your Browsing History" Amazon suggestions.

FRIEND REQUEST

Just ignore it

★★☆☆☆

RELEASED 22 APRIL

TBC | TBC

Director **Simon Verhoeven**

Cast **Alycia Debnam-Carey, Liesl Ahlers, William Moseley, Connor Paolo**

Is "Just turn off your computer!" about to replace "Get out of the house!" as the horror fan's most common howl of disbelief? In *Friend Request*, as in last year's *Unfriended*, a group of friends is haunted by a vengeful ghost who uses the internet to wreak her revenge. But while *Unfriended* had a point to make about the way we interact online, the main thing *Friend Request* seems to know about the internet is that screamer videos exist.

The plot's really just a delivery mechanism for jump scares: pretty and popular Laura (Alycia Debnam-Carey) accepts a friend request from geeky loner Marina (Liesl Ahlers), but recoils when she sees the disturbing content Marina posts to her not-really-Facebook account. When Laura unfriends her, Marina commits suicide – and then the haunting begins.

With more inventive frights, the non-existent story might not have mattered all that much, but even the monsters here are boring; CGI wasps and coloured contact lenses just aren't as terrifying as director Simon Verhoeven seems to think, and all the loud bangs in the world can't hide the complete lack of tension. You'd give yourself more interesting nightmares scrolling through the NoSleep thread on Reddit with the lights off.

Sarah Dobbs

i *Friend Request* was released as *Unfriend* in Germany – then retitled internationally, for obvious reasons.



"Have you seen my pen? Can't find it anywhere."

THE DIVERGENT SERIES: ALLEGIANT

Well-worn genes

★★★☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!
12A | 121 minutes
Director **Robert Schwentke**
Cast **Shailene Woodley, Theo James, Miles Teller, Naomi Watts, Ansel Elgort**

The films adapted from Veronica Roth's *Divergent* novels have so far proved to be competent versions of the stories of Tris (Shailene Woodley), Four (Theo James) and the rest of the gang in a dystopian future Chicago divided into factions by different human traits. And so it proves for *Allegiant*, the first of two offerings spawned from the third book in the YA trilogy, which peels back yet another layer of the narrative onion here as Tris discovers what was really behind her home city and its divided people.

As with *Mockingjay Part 1*, it suffers a little from needing to spin the wheels to draw out the climax for the next film, but maintains the action level with Four's dive into what the Bureau of Genetic Welfare is really all about.

This of course means that themes of eugenics, ethical dilemmas and the concept of trying to unite people instead of splitting them are hit hard again, while our heroes hold to their usual modes: Tris the heroic decision-maker, Four the thoughtful soldier type, Caleb (Ansel Elgort) the nervy worrywart and Peter (Miles Teller) the total shit, always looking out for himself and delivering snarky laughs along the way.

Director Robert Schwentke lets the expanding plot up the ante, but some of this world's bigger faults are also magnified: not all of the setpieces work, and the big climactic plot feels repetitive, especially when it comes to a leader making bad choices. Still, *Allegiant* is diverting enough and while the continuing changes may not please all fans of the books, it solidly lays the groundwork for the finale. **James White**

i According to Theo James, some of the cast entertained themselves between takes by having head-butting competitions. Ouch.



The popcorn storm just wouldn't ease.

THE PASSING

Valleys of death

★★★☆☆

RELEASED 8 APRIL
15 | 89 minutes
Director **Gareth Bryn**
Cast **Annes Elwy, Dyfan Dwyfor, Mark Lewis Jones**

Ghost stories don't get much more slow-burning than this Welsh-language chiller. When Sara (Annes Elwy) and Iwan (Dyfan Dwyfor) crash their car into a river in a remote part of Wales, they're saved by the reclusive Stanley (Mark Lewis Jones), who brings them back to his farmhouse. You'd expect the haunting to start there, but it doesn't.

Or at least, not the supernatural kind. Sara, Iwan and Stanley all have their own personal ghosts to contend with, and it's the way they interact, their secrets brushing up against one another, that creates an atmosphere of creeping dread. The actual ghost, when it finally turns up, is almost a relief – it breaks up the intensity of the relationship between the three leads.

Even then, though, the deliberate pacing might have tipped over into outright boredom if it weren't for the stunning visuals. The Welsh countryside looks gorgeous, even when it's tipping down with rain, and that beauty also lends otherwise inconsequential moments an air of significance. There aren't any real frights here, so thrillseekers should look elsewhere; this is character-driven storytelling of the kind best reserved for wet Sunday afternoons. **Sarah Dobbs**

i Ed Talfan wrote the script in English, then worked with Welsh novelist Caryl Lewis to adapt it.



Getting stuck in a tube: worrying.

THE BRAND NEW TESTAMENT

★★★★☆

RELEASED 15 APRIL
15 | 115 minutes

Belgian fabulist Jaco Van Dormael's warm, cheeky and inventive satire proves Monty Python don't hold a patent on God-coms. With Benoît Poelvoorde's God presented as a mean-spirited grouch, his daughter visits Earth and gathers fresh apostles for a brighter Testament.

Madcap wit, invention and all-embracing compassion compensate for sketchy plotting; even the devout, surely, will warm to Dormael's winning gospel. **Kevin Harley**

ALSO OUT



Three more releases to tell you about which sneaked through our mighty reviews net. Sadly, **BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE** wasn't screened for critics until after this issue went to press. On 8 April, Chris Hemsworth gets his chopper out again as he toplines *Snow White And The Huntsman* follow-up **THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR**. Finally, on 15 April Kevin Costner plays an ex-con implanted with a dead CIA agent's memories in **CRIMINAL**. We'll deliver a verdict on all three next issue – in the meantime, be sure to let us know what you think of *Batman V Superman*!

VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN

Monster mush

★★½☆☆ EXTRAS ★★½☆☆

RELEASED 11 APRIL
2015 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD
Director **Paul McGuigan**
Cast **Daniel Radcliffe, James McAvoy, Jessica Brown Findlay, Andrew Scott**

Mary Shelley's genre-catalysing classic work of literature has been given the electrode rebirth treatment so many times through the years that any new take needs to offer something truly fresh, or it'll come off smelling rotten and burned to a crisp. Sadly, despite boasting a promising creative team on both sides of the camera, *Victor Frankenstein* must unfortunately shamble off to a place among the tarnished, the stinking and the lacklustre.

It was all so full of promise, with Daniel Radcliffe, who's found interesting work in his post-*Potter* career, paired with James McAvoy, someone who usually delivers sparky, engaged performances. Bolt on a script from *Chronicle*'s Max Landis, no stranger to putting a new spin on seemingly well-worn concepts, and add the eye of Paul McGuigan, a director of mixed success on the big screen who's earned hefty praise for TV's *Sherlock*... Surely together they can cook up something of a postmodern Prometheus? The answer, regrettably, is no.

McAvoy and Radcliffe give it their all, trying to make invigorating versions of Victor Frankenstein (a typically wild intellectual brought low by his own ambitions) and assistant Igor (his hunched back quickly solved in this instance), who meet unexpectedly and form a dangerous partnership. Yet the tweaks to their characters – particularly Radcliffe's Igor, who starts as a circus freak who's also taught himself anatomy – feel like they've barely moved past the first new idea or two, and rarely seem to blend with the film's other notions. There's a real grab-bag of concepts on display here: Frankenstein has daddy issues; the duo's early experiments with a chimpanzee make a stab at broad comedy; and the calculating, pious police inspector (Andrew "Moriarty" Scott, initially dialling down the cackle in favour of buttoned-down) wants to channel the usual pitchfork-wielding villagers. It just. Doesn't. Work. *Victor Frankenstein* is neither as fun as it seems to think it is, nor as serious as it intends to be during the predictably monstrous climax.



The hospital's new cleaners were rubbish.



"This rice pudding hasn't worked!"

Talking of Scott, McGuigan's stylistic choices mean this initially feels like a *Sherlock* spin-off – all whizzy graphical overlays for the Science Bits and the way the title character is introduced. The show's cast are also dotted about, with Mark Gatiss (Mycroft), Louise Brealey (Molly) and Andrew Petrie (who guest-starred in one episode) all showing up. If you were to play a drinking game about people or ideas borrowed from *Sherlock* during the early parts of the film, you'd be slurring your words after half an hour.

> "As missed opportunities go, one of the biggest of last year"

All involved clearly wanted to make it work more smoothly than it does, but they just can't seem to



find the right spark. Landis's script largely gives Radcliffe and McAvoy ham to chew on, and when you throw in nods to better versions of the story, such as James Whale's 1931 effort and Mel Brooks's *Young Frankenstein* (listen out for someone mis-pronouncing the doctor's name), you're only going to pale in comparison. And when the script tries to shoehorn in real emotion and explore Victor's drives, it sits uneasily with all the wackiness, coming across as sentimental and false. Plus, despite an obvious yearning to be as active and modern-feeling as, say, Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*, the film gives the likes of Jessica Brown Findlay (who plays Igor's acrobat love interest, Lorelei) nothing to do. By the time it rushes to the big, effects-laden conclusion, you'll have ceased caring.

What does work? Well, some of the production design is impressive, with the doctor's lab particularly funky, full of gears and scientific equipment. But even that's let down by the fact that the London backgrounds are murky muddles, and rarely look like a good use of CG. Scott is largely good value, and Charles Dance makes an impact in a small yet pivotal role. But as missed opportunities go, this was one of the biggest to hit cinema screens last year – failing to come alive despite everything its different parts brought to it.

Extras A Making Of and photo galleries of production designs and on-set photography feel like the least they could have done – and they did. The Blu-ray release adds an assortment of deleted scenes (14 minutes). **James White**

i The name of Victor's brother, Henry, is a nod to the name of the doctor in 1931's classic film adaptation.

MIND PROBE

JAMES McAVOY

Victor in *Victor Frankenstein*



Did you go back to Mary Shelley's novel?
→ I reread the book. I read it when I was in my early teens. I didn't love it, to be honest with you. And I didn't love it again when I was older!

What's your take on Victor?
→ The character in the film is fuelled by bereavement and grief and the trauma of seeing a loved one die at a very early age. I did a lot of thinking about how that would affect me – could I get to a place where I was still vibrant and energised, being fuelled by that very sad and morbid thing? It's not just giving him grief, it's giving him actual fear. He's terrified of death.

How does Victor compare to Professor X?
→ They're very different kinds of professor. I was making *Days Of Future Past*, where Professor Xavier was all messed up and a bit more maverick, and that's when the same studio offered me *Frankenstein*, so there was a similarity there. It does feel quite strange to be playing two professors... Although Victor in this movie is not even a qualified doctor. He must be a pretty shit doctor, because I'm 36. He must be a bad student!
Nick Setchfield



The Chancellor was determined to get to the Budget on time.

DRINKING GAME

Knock back a beverage of your choice every time...

- **Someone tells Harry, "That's impossible! How did you do that?" or some variation thereof.**
- **Harry moons about over his ex.**
- **Eve, who gave Harry the bracelet, says something enigmatic, and clearly knows more than he does.**
- **Harry uses the bracelet and everything goes into cheesy slow-mo.**
- **Harry's boss is being a dick.**
- **Something bad happens because Harry used his luck. Take an extra drink if it affects Suri.**

STAN LEE'S LUCKY MAN Series One

The luck of the Irish

★★★½☆ EXTRAS ★★☆☆☆

RELEASED 4 APRIL
2016 | 15 | DVD
Creators **Stan Lee, Neil Biswas**
Cast **James Nesbitt, Amara Khan, Sienna Guillory, Steven Mackintosh**

"Whoever wears the bracelet is endowed with immense luck," somebody tells police detective Harry (James Nesbitt), as he struggles to figure out why he can't get the bloody thing off his wrist – it having appeared there the morning after a one-night stand. His response? Pretty much what most people would say, and with a pleasingly blunt turn of phrase: "Well, that's *shite*."

But is it? Harry, a compulsive gambler, soon starts to notice he's winning big, and can take ridiculous risks during police chases. Before long he's walking across a motorway dodging cars going at full speed, or jumping off buildings without a thought for his personal safety, all because his bracelet is wrangling the odds of the universe to help him survive. All very handy when you're trying to solve a murder case and the bad guys are trying to stop you.

There's nothing particularly original about any of this, of course: '90s series *Strange Luck* also had a preternaturally lucky lead character, for instance. But *Lucky Man* not only has Stan Lee's name attached to bring in the viewers, it also has the charming Nesbitt as its star and Amara Khan as his partner, Suri, who manages to be a superb, well-rounded female character. For the first half of the series, watching these two working together is a delight... but then comes the second half, where it all starts to unravel.

As the net starts to close in the investigation and Harry finds himself a target, not only does all the fun leach out of the show but all the wit and intelligence, too, until it becomes little more than a standard primetime drama which for huge chunks of the time seems to forget it has supernatural elements. Without the witty back-and-forth between Harry and Suri, and with the plot becoming easier to figure out with each minute – the revelation of the Big Bad wouldn't even surprise your cat – it feels as though the writing team just ran out of steam.

However, despite this, *Lucky Man* is still worth a watch. It's beautifully shot, making London look very glamorous; the supporting cast is superb; the idea that Harry ends up making somebody suffer every time he uses the bracelet is morally intriguing – although perhaps not played out as well as it could have been – and then there's Nesbitt. It's a joy to see an actor so talented given such a meaty role, and you can see his eyes twinkling with delight in almost every scene. Definitely a lucky man.

Extras A Making Of and three further short featurettes (24 minutes). **Jayne Nelson**

Naturally, there's a Stan Lee cameo: in episode one – Harry walks past Forbidden Planet and Stan's inside signing autographs.

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DOCTOR WHO Season Nine

Guitar Man

★★★★☆ EXTRAS ★★★½☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

2015 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

Showrunner **Steven Moffat**

Cast **Peter Capaldi, Jenna Coleman, Maisie Williams, Alex Kingston**

Christmas episodes bookend this box set. One's great, the other's not; such is the lottery of festive *Who*.

"Last Christmas" kicks things off in fine style. A hybrid of *The Thing*, *Alien* and *Miracle On 34th Street*, it's the best seasonal special since "A Christmas Carol" and marks an important transitional phase for Capaldi's Doctor.

Yes, this was the year that Twelve learned to kick back, relax and play his guitar. His showy entrance in "The Magician's Apprentice" is a startling contrast to the distant figure he cut throughout season eight, but Moffat and Capaldi make it seem like a natural evolution.

A shame, then, that the first half of the season feels oddly flat, with a vague arc, a confusing opener and Clara often sidelined. Peter Harness's Zygon two-parter gets things back on track, however, setting up a superior second half, of which the astonishing "Heaven Sent" is the clear highlight. A showcase for Capaldi, it's like nothing *Doctor Who* has ever attempted before.

Finally, there's "The Husbands Of River Song". Comedy is exactly what was needed at this point, but this falls very flat. Alex Kingston shines in the poignant final act, but with Greg Davies lumbering around in a robot suit and Matt Lucas gurning, it's hard work getting to that point.



Elvis patiently waited his turn.

Extras A well-stocked set, though there's little truly essential. The 25 minutes of deleted scenes slip in a few more jokes for the Doctor and some welcome call-backs to Danny Pink (RIP). We see more of Ashildr's tragic history in the years between "The Girl Who Died" and "The Woman Who Lived" and – hold onto your hat – some short shots of Kate Stewart walking.

On the documentary front, there's 14 episodes of *Doctor Who Extra*; a brief and breezy watch, light on insight but good fun. The longer features are better. "Writing *Who*" follows "Face The Raven" scribe Sarah Dollard as she takes us through the process of getting her episode from initial pitch to the screen; "Clara's Journey" gives Jenna Coleman the chance to look back on her four years on the show, while "The Adventures Of River Song" explains the history of, well, take a guess. "Sublime Online" pulls together videos originally published on the *Who* website, "*The Fan Show*'s Finest" is a best bits package from the YouTube series and "Dalek Devotion" finds Capaldi and Moffat nerding out about the Skarosian pepperpots.

> "'Heaven Sent' is the clear highlight"

You also get commentaries on four episodes (the Reece Shearsmith and Mark Gatiss track on "Sleep No More" being the most engaging), a Comic-Con panel, episode prologues and trailers. But the most worthwhile extra here is an hour-long chat between Wil Wheaton, Capaldi and Coleman; Wheaton gets amusingly flustered at one point and Capaldi is charm personified. **Will Salmon**

i "Sleep No More" was originally intended to be a two-part story; Mark Gatiss still hopes to pen a sequel.


Maybe it has "This is a fake" on the back.

VAULT OF HORROR

The EC way out

★★★★☆ EXTRAS ☆☆☆☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

1973 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director **Roy Ward Baker**

Cast **Tom Baker, Curt Jurgens, Terry-Thomas, Denholm Elliott**

Dismemberment. Ritual murder. Premature burial. The good things in life. And all celebrated in this portmanteau chiller from Amicus, masters of the selection box principle when it comes to horror movies – if you don't care for the Coffee Scream then don't fret, for the Strawberry Heart is leaking real blood.

Five men find themselves riding a lift to a strange basement room. They share their disturbing dreams, cueing five tales adapted from the lurid pages of EC Comics, whose dimestore chills sparked a moral panic in '50s America.

Full of grisly pay-offs and mordant humour, the movie takes EC's winking sense of grotesquerie and marries it with that cheap'n'cosy Twickenham Studios vibe of the early '70s. Arch cad Terry-Thomas, future Bond villain Curt Jurgens and an intense, bearded, pre-*Who* Tom Baker carry these entertaining stories of vampirism, voodoo and the wife's knickers. Baker's tale of a vengeance-obsessed painter has a genuine shudder.

Naturally there's an existential zinger at the end. But given the cover of this release declares "Death's waiting room" in big, friendly letters you may be ahead of the game...

Extras None. **Nick Setchfield**

i The title's misleading. The stories ran in *Tales From The Crypt* and *Shock SuspenStories*, not *Vault Of Horror*.


"I'm *not* giving these clothes to the charity shop!"

THE HALLOW

The Boys With The Black Stuff

★★★½☆ EXTRAS ★★½☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

2015 | 15 | DVD

Director **Corin Hardy**

Cast **Joseph Mawle, Bojana Novakovic, Michael McElhatton, Michael Smiley**

The last thing horror fans need right now, surely, is another film set in the woods? But this Irish effort manages to overcome your initial kneejerk eye-roll.

When forestry expert Adam (Joseph Mawle) moves his family to a remote community to commence preparations for logging, he gets a decidedly frosty reception. "The Forest belongs to the Hallow," he's told – and as events spiral out of control and the house is besieged by these folkloric faeries, there's a danger that soon so will his baby son...

From the wild-eyed neighbour with his *Illustrated Big Book Of Lore* to the use of a camera flash to scare off encroaching beasties, it all feels rather familiar. But it's also done rather well. Mixing monster movie with body horror, it's atmospheric, sufficiently tense to keep you hooked, with strong performances. The shrieking Hallow, generally only half-glimpsed, are effective monsters. Their habit of leaving weird piles of slimy black matter – like gnarled roots doused in Castrol GTX – is satisfyingly shuddersome, while their penchant for poking people in the eye will keep Lucio Fulci fans happy.

Extras A Making Of (49 minutes); three brief behind-the-scenes featurettes; four galleries of stuff like storyboards and concept sketches; trailer. **Ian Berriman**

i Keep your eyes peeled in the final scene (where you see workers at a logging site) for a cameo by director Corin Hardy.


"Let's find a Frankenstein film!"

PANDORICA

★★½☆☆☆

RELEASED 1 APRIL

2016 | TBC | VOD

Set generations after a global disaster that's wiped out most of humanity, this low-budget horror (nothing to do with *Doctor Who*) follows three members of a tribe as they embark on a test to see which of them will lead their village.

Unfortunately, 90% of the plot (what little there is) takes place in a forest at night and the darkness gets boring pretty damn fast. The action consists mainly of people bickering, running around, fighting bad guys who bump into them, then running around some more. It's really hard to care. **Jayne Nelson**


He wants to get that wart seen to.

A WARRIOR'S TAIL

★★½☆☆☆ EXTRAS ☆☆☆☆☆

RELEASED 11 APRIL

2016 | PG | DVD

It feels mean being harsh on this kids' CG cartoon, which looks attractive in places and is inoffensive. Unfortunately, its story, characters, dialogue and exposition are so poor that it's massively boring.

A young boy (voiced by Milla Jovovich) must save his village from wicked hyenas and monkeys, aided by a talking white wolf and others. But neither the guest vocals by the likes of Whoopi Goldberg, Sharon Stone and Joe Pesci nor a triple-headed monkey villainess can lift the film.

Extras None. **Andrew Osmond**


Less Bear Grylls, more Bore Grylls.

MAN VS

★★☆☆☆ EXTRAS ☆☆☆☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

2015 | 15 | DVD

It's not often you can criticise a film for *not* being found footage, but *Man Vs* is that rare case. Doug (Chris Diamantopoulos) is filming his own low-budget survivalist TV show. Alone with his cameras, he finds himself being stalked by an unseen predator... but is the creature not of this Earth?

It's the ideal set-up for some shakycam shenanigans, but instead *Man Vs* plays it straight – and boring. Sometimes, less is more, and here the competent camerawork actually undermines the scares. Shame.

Extras None. **Sarah Dobbs**


That's a three-flusher...

GHOULIES

★★☆☆☆ EXTRAS ★★½☆☆

RELEASED 11 APRIL

1984 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

BLU-RAY DEBUT **You've got to** wonder how some stuff gets a high-def release, such as this cheapo horror from schlock producer Charles Band.

A young chap moves into a mansion, where he dabbles in the occult. The result? Gremlins-like creatures run amok, although there's more of sorcerers and, er, midgets.

Ghoulies is pretty dopey stuff, mostly minus the flesh and blood that many would be after in an '80s teen horror. Cute puppets, though.

Extras Director's intro and commentary. **Russell Lewin**



The UK Eurovision entry got no points.

THE CHILDREN OF GREEN KNOWE

Not a Box Of Delights

★★½☆☆ EXTRAS ☆☆☆☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

1986 | U | DVD

Director **Colin Cant**

Cast **Alec Christie, Daphne Oxenford, George Malpas**

You know the drill – classic children's books, beloved BBC adaptation, DVD release finally allowing us to return to childhood favourites – but how often do these nostalgia-fests really turn out to be as good as remembered? Not often, alas. This latest release is based on the first novel in Lucy M Boston's *Green Knowe* series, centred on a ghost-filled manor house based on the author's own family home.

Young Toseland (Tolly) is spending Christmas with his great-grandmother, at the family manor of Green Knowe. While there, she tells him stories of ancestors who lived in the house, and he sees echoes of the children around the place.

Director Cant gives this four-part serial a good sense of atmosphere, and it has a cosy, old-fashioned reserve that still appeals, but for most of the story *nothing happens*. There are ghosts. There is giggling. There is flute music. Tolly runs around the grounds getting overly emotional about garden ornaments. There's a small sense of danger in the final episode, but unfortunately that can't make up for two hours of family anecdotes and hide and seek.

Extras None. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i Colin Cant also directed the '90s BBC children's series *Dark Season* and *Century Falls*, by Russell T Davies.



Drugs: brilliant.

THE GOOD DINOSAUR

Seenitbeforeus Rex

★★★½☆ EXTRAS ★★★☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

2015 | PG | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD

Director **Peter Sohn**

Cast **Jeffrey Wright, Frances McDormand, Raymond Ochoa**

Pixar's second big-screen outing of last year isn't a patch on the innovative *Inside Out*. It's Pixar by numbers, an affable but generic talking animal movie that looks stunning, yet never escapes the sense we've seen it all before.

That's despite a great alternate history premise, which ponders what might have happened if the asteroid that killed off the dinosaurs had missed Earth. Evolution takes a very different route, one where dinosaurs have become farmers, and cross paths with early humans. It's an intriguing world, yet the opportunity to explore it is rapidly consumed by *Lion King*-esque family tragedy which sends two mismatched characters on a literal and figurative journey that *Finding Nemo* did better.

The relationship between cowardly apatosaurus Arlo and his dog-like human sidekick Spot is undeniably touching – even on autopilot, Pixar can tug the heartstrings like nobody else. Unfortunately, the supporting players don't get the time to develop into fully-rounded characters, ultimately upstaged by scenery so jaw-droppingly beautiful that it looks like John Ford's been resurrected and given state-of-the-art computers to make a Western. After *Inside Out*, which reminded us of a time when every new Pixar release promised something we'd never seen before, this feels like a bunch of talented people going through the motions.

Extras Don't expect the low-down on Pixar's decision to replace the original director and most of the voice cast. Instead you get commentary by various crew, three deleted scenes, short "Sanjay's Super Team" (in which an Indian boy imagines Hindu gods as superheroes), faux-B-roll of the dinosaurs messing around, and brief featurettes on topics such as animating the characters and meeting real-life ranchers. The DVD has just the commentary and the short. **Richard Edwards**

i Pixar sneaked in their now-standard A113 reference – the number appears in a fence when Arlo goes out to feed the chickens.



Spa day went all sorts of wrong.

THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN

Enfants terrific

★★★★½ EXTRAS ★★★½☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

1995 | 15 | Blu-ray & DVD (Double play)

Directors **Marc Caro, Jean-Pierre Jeunet**

Cast **Ron Perlman, Judith Vittet, Daniel Emilfork, Dominique Pinon**

BLU-RAY DEBUT **The creation of** *Delicatessen* duo Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet, *The City Of Lost Children* is a film about dream stealers. And it genuinely feels like something snatched from your unconscious, just before waking.

Mixing cinematic surrealism, brass-edged Gallic steampunk and the make-it-up-as-you-go energy of the best bedtime stories, this is a self-contained, studio-bound world, a bubble of fable sealed from reality and logic. The story's slim – Ron Perlman's man-child strongman fights a scientist kidnapping urchins – but the narrative's only there to haunt the edges of the glorious visuals.

And these images utterly pop on Blu-ray. From grimy wharves lapped by water the colour of pea soup to a brain encased in a wood-panelled cabinet, to some extraordinary faces, it's a constant banquet for the eyes, part Lynch, part Burton, part del Toro, all of it soaked in a rich European weirdness.

Extras Commentary by Jean-Pierre Jeunet; Making Of featurette; behind-the-scenes footage; a brief 1995 interview with costume designer Jean Paul Gaultier; original trailer and teaser trailers. **Nick Setchfield**

i Digital effects director Pitof went on to direct *Catwoman*. But we don't hold that against him. We're nice like that.



"Don't worry, the cheese and pineapple hedgehog is on its way."

DRINKING GAME

Knock back a beverage of your choice every time...

- One of the characters has a drink themselves!
- Ridge engages in some breaking and entering.
- Quist demands to speak to the Minister.
- Ridge is wearing an eye-wateringly garish floral shirt.
- There's some use of ropey-looking stock footage.
- Ridge shamelessly hits on a female character.
- You recognise an actor from their role in *Doctor Who*. Finish the bottle if it's Professor Zaroff!

DOOMWATCH

Weird Science

★★★½☆ EXTRAS ★★½☆☆

RELEASED 4 APRIL
1970-1972 | 15 | DVD
Creators **Kit Pedler, Gerry Davis**
Cast **John Paul, Simon Oates, Robert Powell, John Nolan**

Devised by the duo who created *Doctor Who*'s Cybermen, *Doomwatch* is justly renowned for being ahead of its time. Transmuting stories ripped from the pages of *New Scientist* into thriller plots, it follows a small government team who investigate potentially harmful scientific research, tackling issues which in many cases are still topical 45 years later. This long-overdue box set features all 24 surviving episodes (14 have been lost).

It's a series that often only skirts the edges of science fiction – a shame, as the most effective episodes are the more outlandish. Take season one's "Tomorrow, The Rat", in which rodents with augmented intelligence become human-hunting killers; though sequences where the cast struggle with stuffed rats stitched to their trousers give you the giggles, it still induces a shiver. Also excellent: the likes of "Invasion", in which a germ warfare agent causes the evacuation of a village, and "The Plastic Eaters", in which a virus designed to destroy waste gets loose on a plane.

Other episodes feel rather mundane. In one the stakes are a schoolboy being expelled. In another, it takes Doomwatch 40 minutes to twig that an astronaut is a paranoiac. This is fairly typical; though it doesn't quite go full *Columbo*, the cause of the latest disaster is often apparent within five minutes, leaving the viewer twiddling their thumbs while the team catch up. Disappointing in a different way is the notorious, never-transmitted "Sex & Violence", in which they mystifyingly become involved with the issue of *moral* pollution. Coming across like a late-night debate show, it's fish-in-a-barrel stuff – all the conservative figures are foam-mouthed bigots, particularly a censorious character played by June "Dot Cotton" Brown, who's clearly a two-fingered salute to clean-up campaigner Mary Whitehouse.

A couple of great characters keep you watching: Dr Quist (John Paul), brusque, straight-talking scourge of complacent politicians, a terrier in a bulldog's body; and ex-spy John Ridge (Simon Oates), a ladies' man with a wardrobe as gasp-inducing as his chat-up patter. It's just a shame that among all the male egos locking antlers, women are poorly served, generally there as the secretary or the wife. It's one respect in which the series wasn't so forward-looking. Even when a female scientist is eventually introduced, the character's big episode hinges on her descending into hysteria. Oh dear.

Extras Hoping for digital restorations and specially-shot bonuses? Tough. The only extra is a doc from 2006 BBC Four series *The Cult Of...* (29 minutes) – it's decent, mind, featuring plenty of amusingly frank interviews with cast and crew. Dropouts and other artefacts are noticeable on the episodes themselves, and a few suffer particularly badly – many were "reverse converted" from overseas copies returned to the Beeb. Still, this *is* a very niche release; we're probably lucky to have it at all. **Ian Berriman**

i Simon Oates (Ridge) wore a dog collar round his neck in one episode, after a director bet him £50 that he wouldn't.



Last Of The Summer Wine really did go on too long.

BURIAL GROUND

Having a 'mare

★★½☆☆ EXTRAS ★★★½☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

1981 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director **Andrea Bianchi**

Cast **Karin Well, Gianluigi Chirizzi, Simone Mattioli, Antonella Antinori**

Not bothered if a film has no plot? Don't care for characterisation, logic, sane dialogue, decent acting, proper pacing or variety of action? Then *Burial Ground* is for you!

This gory Italian horror, also known as *The Nights Of Terror*, makes *Night Of The Living Dead* look like *Memento*. A group of socialites are attacked by the undead in and around a mansion. And that's *all* the story – honest!

That may sound flippant but there is a genuine argument in favour of this film – that it plays out as a bad dream would, and that the unrelenting tide of terror is effective on a visceral level. That its ignoring of filmic conventions is deliberate and contributes to its raw power. Maybe...

What's undeniable is that the zombie masks and make-up are excellent, and wisps of bizarre sleaze waft up now and then to give it a unique charge: if you ever wanted to see a dwarf actor pretending to be a boy who fancies his mother bite her breast off after being turned into a zombie, this is your movie.

Extras Commentary featuring horror experts John Martin and Calum Waddell; an interview with author Mikel Coven about the films of Andrea Bianchi; deleted scenes; trailer; a "grindhouse" version from an unrestored 35mm print; booklet. **Russell Lewin**

i The young boy is played by Pietro Barzocchini (credited as Peter Bark), who was around 25 at the time of filming!

THE SURVIVALIST

The World Without Us

★★★★☆ EXTRAS ★★½☆☆

RELEASED 18 APRIL

2016 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director **Stephen Fingleton**

Cast **Martin McCann, Mia Goth, Olwen Fouere, Andrew Simpson**

Stephen Fingleton's debut feature opens with a simple visual: a red line and a blue line charting the rise and dramatic fall of human civilisation after the oil runs out. It's the only hint of world-building in this pared back and unflinchingly brutal post-apocalypse thriller.

Martin McCann plays the nameless survivalist – a bearded, mulleted loner living a quiet life in a rural shack. He grows his own crops and kills those who are foolish enough to cross his path. An encounter with Kathryn (Olwen Fouere) and her daughter Milja (Mia Goth), however, leads to an uneasy alliance based on sex and work for food. As the three live together, their shifting allegiances threaten to destroy everything.

With no incidental music and only sparse dialogue (it's a full 17 minutes before a word is spoken), *The Survivalist* relies entirely on its visuals and the brilliant, unsettling performances of the central trio. All three characters shift between victim and villain at various points and the film thrums with the ever-present threat of violence. Goth, in particular, is superb – dead-eyed and determined, but with a flicker of empathy as her bond with McCann begins to grow into something apparently sincere.

Although the film sticks to just a handful of locations – the cabin and the woods, mostly – Fingleton demonstrates a real visual flair. An elegant crane shot that moves between McCann and a would-be assassin lurking in the long grass is fantastically tense, and there's a hint of Terrence Malick in his depiction of a world thriving in humanity's absence. Combined with a soundtrack that's composed almost entirely of background noise – wind rattling the trees, bird song, trickling water – it makes for an impressively immersive (if exceedingly dour) experience. There's no racing around in souped-up cars in this future, just the endless daily scrabble to survive.



And still the Ewok slaughter continued.

Extras A Making Of (43 minutes). **Will Salmon**

i To help secure funding for the film, Fingleton made a 16-minute prequel short called *Magpie*: http://bit.ly/survmag.



Bloomin' jam doughnuts!

THE NINE DEMONS

Chopsocky goes to hell

★★½☆☆ EXTRAS ★★½☆☆

RELEASED 11 APRIL

1984 | 15 | DVD

Director **Chang Cheh**

Cast **Cheng Tien-Chi, Wang Li, Chang Fu-Chien, Chiang Seng**

So there's these child acrobats, right, and they jump on people, bite them; then they turn into flying skulls, and the skulls fill up with blood...

Yep, *The Nine Demons* is one *bonkers* movie.

One of scores of kung fu pics by director Chang Cheh (best known for *Five Deadly Venoms*), it's a rough version of *Faust*, with a young fella (Cheng Tien-Chi) granted demonic powers so he can seek revenge for the death of his father. He goes too far, though, and abuses his gifts.

The result is endless scrapping, somersaults, wire work, jump cuts, crash zooms and ear-slapping sound effects. The costumes are flamboyant, the action frantic, and it might just be the most colourful film ever made. But the novelty fades after a while. Despite being infused with a bizarre imagination it's all a bit one-note, and the lack of breathing space – it's pretty much either talk or tussle – is ultimately numbing.

Extras The main bonus is an "old-school English dubbed picture" which is a little shorter, badly cropped and of poor picture quality, with amusingly appalling dubbing. You also get an interview with actor Yu Tai-Ping (three minutes), a stills gallery and trailers. **Russell Lewin**

i John Woo describes Chang Cheh as his mentor; Woo spent three years working for him as an assistant director.



They laugh, but that's a severed hand.

JERUZALEM

Through glasses, darkly

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★★☆☆

RELEASED 4 APRIL

2015 | 15 | DVD/VOD

Directors **Yoav and Doron Paz**

Cast **Danielle Jadelyn, Yaelv Grobglas, Yon Tumarkin**

Found-footage horrors often struggle to justify why anyone would keep filming when all hell is breaking loose around them. *Jeruzalem* has a great solution to that problem: it's shot from the (literal) POV of a tourist who's wearing Google Glass-style smartglasses. After getting her specs stolen on the first day of her Holy City holiday, Sarah (Danielle Jadelyn) is left with no option but to wear her high-tech lenses – and to keep filming, no matter what.

It's a clever conceit that lets the filmmakers tell bits of the story through the text messages and photos that pop up in front of Sarah's eyes. The setting is intriguing, too; the first half of the film makes the most of the religious and political tensions that already exist in Jerusalem, creating an atmosphere of dread even before the horror kicks in.

But then it does, and everything goes wrong. The carefully constructed tension collapses when the crappy CGI demons pop up, which just leaves a bunch of people running and screaming in the dark. Shame there aren't smartglasses that can swap out bad endings to promising horror movies.

Extras Commentary; deleted scenes; Making Of; music video; trailer. **Sarah Dobbs**

i The Paz Brothers cheated filming in Jerusalem – they had permits for shooting a documentary, not a drama.



That's gonna need more than a plaster.

FUSÉ

Medieval werewolves

★★★½☆ EXTRAS ★★★½☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

2012 | 15 | Blu-ray & DVD (double-play)/DVD

Director **Masayuki Miyaji**

Cast **Minako Kotobuki, Mamoru Miyano, Atsushi Abe**

This cheery – if gory – anime adventure may remind some of the 2001 French film *Brotherhood Of The Wolf*; like that, it's a period adventure with intrepid hunters chasing monstrous wolves. The setting is 19th century Edo (later Tokyo) and the lead is a teenage girl (Hamaji), refreshingly *not* a cute stereotype in the usual anime style.

Lively fights, colourful backdrops and merry bit-characters make for an enjoyable watch. However, the story can lose focus, leaving important strands under-developed – especially the relationship between Hamaji and a pale male stranger.

Fusé (subtitled *Memoirs Of The Hunter Girl*) is actually an elaborate tribute to a 19th century Japanese prose epic called *The Hakkenden*, about warriors descended from a princess and a wolf. The later scenes get increasingly meta, with *The Hakkenden*'s author turning up in the film along with his geeky fangirl granddaughter. It all culminates in an entertainingly swashbuckling finale, staged in a massive burning tower.

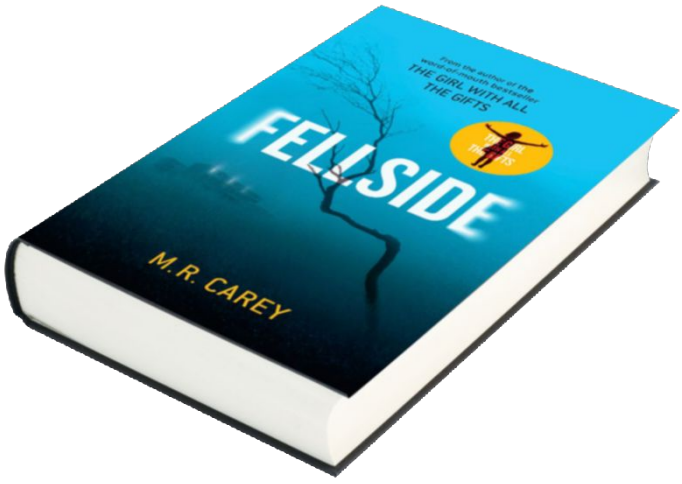
Extras Just a trailer and TV spots – though the double-play Collector's Edition comes with a 36-page art book. **Andrew Osmond**

i *The Hakkenden* has had many adaps, including an anime, a live-action film and even a popular TV puppet serial.

(ROUND UP)



In Scottish gothic horror **THE OWLMAN** (DVD, out now) a man's plagued by nightmares about an owl-headed figure after inheriting a family estate in the Highlands. A slow-burning, atmospheric film which blends Lovecraft, ancient folklore and Bibilical references, it may appeal to fans of *The Innocents* and *The Wicker Man*. Blumhouse Productions are behind **SOUTH OF HELL** SEASON ONE (DVD, out now). This eight-part supernatural thriller series stars Mena Suvari as a freelance exorcist who herself harbours a demon. South Carolina is an interesting setting, so it's a shame about the over-written dialogue, wooden performances, lack of scares, and general generic feel. Stick with *Supernatural*. The latest DC Universe animated movie, **BATMAN: BAD BLOOD** (Blu-ray, out now), is a sequel to 2015's *Batman Vs Robin*. For much of the duration Batman's sidelined, apparently killed in an explosion. Nightwing dons the Batsuit in his stead and teams with Batwoman and Bat-son Damian Wayne to investigate his disappearance. If you like your Bat-stories action-packed but light on actual Batman, you'll be happy... Finally in **THE MONSTER CHRONICLES: TIKTIK** (DVD, out now) a Filipino guy must protect his pregnant girlfriend as her family home is besieged by Aswang – shapeshifting creatures from Philippines folklore with a taste for babies. It's a simple, comic book-y tale which blends comedy, action and horror, to campily appealing effect. Only ropey CGI monsters (this is the first Filipino film shot using greenscreen) let the side down.



FELLSIDE

Prisoner Cell Block RIP

★★★½☆

RELEASED 7 APRIL
496 pages | Hardback/ebook
Author **MR Carey**
Publisher **Orbit**

Prisons are fertile ground for horror writers – though perhaps it's not quite right to describe *Fellside* as a horror novel. There's a ghost, true, and protagonist Jess – convicted of killing a child after she burns down her apartment while under the influence of heroin – isn't exactly beloved of her fellow inmates. While MR Carey doesn't overdo the clichéd prison brutality, he doesn't shy away from the nasty side of life behind bars either; the prisoners have a clearly defined social structure and anyone stepping out of line risks severe injury or even being murdered. Yet for all that, *Fellside* has a dreamlike quality that means on the whole it's intriguing rather than frightening.

The reader first encounters Jess in hospital, badly burned and with no memory of the night of the fire in which her young neighbour died. Despite being the most prominent person in the story, she's probably the least tangible element in it – not quite all there, and trying to change from what she was before she went to prison, so even her personality is in flux. Thanks to the fire, she doesn't even have the face she remembers. When Jess makes contact with the ghost in Fellside prison, Alex, she's convinced it's not real. Yet you never really feel in any doubt that it is. This isn't a book that teases you with ambiguity about the supernatural. Alex is as real as prisoner Harriet Grace's drugs smuggling operation and control of Fellside's maximum security wing. Jess is the one in a state of uncertainty.

The real horror doesn't come from the ghost, and the real nastiness isn't found within the majority of the inmates. Harriet Grace and her cronies aside, most of the other prisoners seem fairly benign towards Jess. The people in control, however, are at best weak and at worst actively malevolent. That's nothing new in a story about prisons – the cruel guard is a staple – but their relationships with each other are as important as their relationship to Jess. Moreover, the cruelties and corruption are all individual and kept in character: Devlin, a particularly brutal guard, revels in it; the doctor despairs of what he's become under Devlin's influence; and the nurse lies to herself about her aims and intentions. Seeing the intertwining lives of these other characters definitely helps the narrative, as the prisoners' existence is, naturally, one of dull routine, and were the story to follow Jess alone the pace would feel rather leaden.

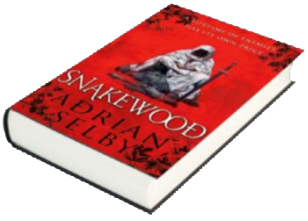
> "On the whole it's intriguing rather than frightening"

Fellside has a couple of weaknesses. The first is the depiction of the dreamworld in which Jess first encounters the ghost: while she's dying on hunger strike, it brings her back into a strange, shifting place. After that, she's able to see it at other times too; and when she's asleep, she can enter other people's dreams with Alex. In reducing something like this to words you risk either making it appear banal (see *Harry Potter*'s heavenly waiting room) or trying too hard to be weird (*It*'s giant turtle). Carey can't really win here, but does wisely keep the dreamworld sequences to a minimum, usually bringing Alex into Jess's world instead.

The other problem is that the plot is fairly predictable. You'll anticipate the result of Jess's appeal against her conviction long before it comes, and you'll understand Alex's true nature a lot sooner than Jess does. That said, being able to anticipate a great deal of the story doesn't ruin your satisfaction; rather it gives the plot a sense of inevitability, just as in a classical tragedy. When events reach their conclusion, you feel things have gone the only way they could – that this was fate. More twists and surprises would have been welcome, but on the whole this is a solid and enjoyable read.

Miriam McDonald

i Fancy visiting a real haunted prison? You can take a tour of the now-abandoned HMP Ashwell: http://bit.ly/1Xfcwrc.



SNAKEWOOD

Topping Twenty

★★★☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!
414 pages | Hardcover/ebook
Author **Adrian Selby**
Publisher **Orbit Books**

At the height of their fame, Kailen's Twenty were the most feared mercenaries in the world – the finest tacticians, drudhas (brewers of poisons and potions) and fighters ever assembled. But 15 years after the Twenty disbanded, someone is hunting them down and killing them one by one...

In his debut fantasy adventure, Adrian Selby shows that his strengths lie in world-building and fast-paced fight scenes. However, when the characters aren't crossing swords *Snakewood* becomes bogged down by unwieldy prose and exposition dumps – particularly in the second half. On the former score, witness Kailen's description of his spouse: "My wife has the habit those born from the very wealthiest families all have, a grace gently forged from the lack of want, a guileless expectation of decency and a curiosity and compassion for those people's lives the hotter and more intimately joyous and cruel for the want that shapes their suffering and ambition." Oof.

The perspective shifts between letters/historical documents and internal monologues, which are not natural bedfellows, but the regular injections of action sustain just enough momentum to carry the reader on. **David West**

i Adrian Selby was chiefly influenced by two things: *2000 AD* strip *Sláine* and, er, the time he took magic mushrooms.



GEEK PARENTING

How not to raise a Kylo Ren

★★½☆☆

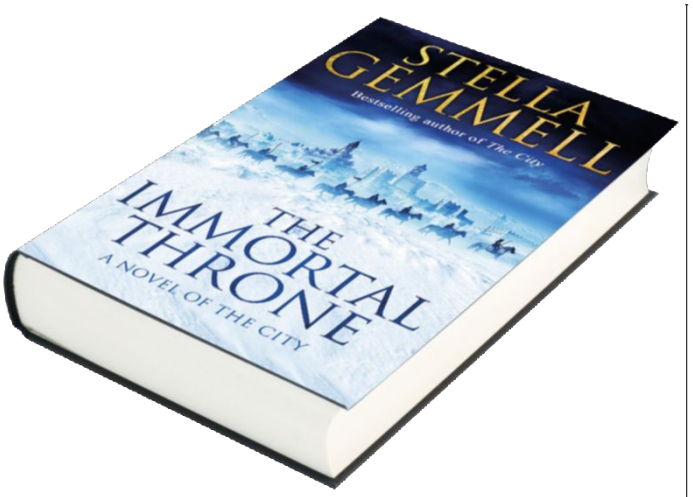
RELEASED 5 APRIL
208 pages | Hardback/ebook
Authors **Stephen H Segal, Valya Dudycz Lupescu**
Publisher **Quirk Books**

SF&F is often at its best when it uses allegory to examine our lives: *Buffy*'s analogies between teenage demons and the horrors of high school; *District 9*'s examination of apartheid. But what's great about those examples is that they take an issue, make it entertaining and trust the audience to figure out the message themselves. If you'd prefer someone to sit down and pull out the lessons – especially the ones tangentially related to parenting – then this book, a collection of mini-essays examining just what parents can learn from various properties, is for you.

The topics covered range from obvious, feel-good "lessons" – read to your children, give them space when they need it, understand that siblings will argue (*The Princess Bride*, *Angel* and *Thor*, respectively) – to more bizarre analogies (Bilbo and Frodo Baggins teach us to think about what we'll leave our children when we die). But there's little that will actually make you feel you've learned something about either parenting or your top TV show.

As a dip-in-and-quote collection it could make a nice present for any geeky parents-to-be you're out shopping for, but don't expect any real wisdom or insights. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i Co-writer Stephen H Segal previously edited 2011's *Geek Wisdom*, "The Sacred Teachings Of Nerd Culture".



THE IMMORTAL THRONE

Stella engineering

★★★★☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!
576 pages | Hardback/ebook
Author **Stella Gemmell**
Publisher **Bantam Press**

Following on from the events of *The City*, *The Immortal Throne* continues to track the fate of Stella Gemmell's enormous, unnamed city-state. In the wake of the emperor's death and the destruction of the palace the City is vulnerable – not least because its ruling class, the Serafim, cannot stop their political infighting. Meanwhile, a barbarian horde is marching on the weakened City.

Some familiar characters make a welcome return, such as the sweet Emly and her lover Broglanh. There's plenty to like about the new characters as well: Rubin, often mentioned in the previous book as Indaro's long-lost brother, provides welcome backstory, while Stern and his band of brave soldiers will give you a cause to root for. But it's the City itself that's the main character. With its winding streets, hidden tunnels and towering walls, it feels unquestionably real, despite its fantastical elements. In truth, fewer point of view characters and more exploration would have been welcome. As it is you may find yourself swapping between people too often, and feeling like your favourites are neglected.

> "Packed with shock twists"

Much like its predecessor, *The Immortal Throne* starts slowly, but the last hundred or so pages are so jam-packed with shock twists, revelations and action that you'll be left breathless. But you might also be left wondering whether some of the secrets revealed at the end could have been eked out throughout the book, rather than in a deluge of answers during the last 50 pages. That said, the City and its denizens still more than deserve the sequel which the ending provides plenty of room for. **Bridie Roman**

i Stella Gemmell met her late husband David when both of them were working as journalists on the *Hastings Observer*.



THE LAZARUS WAR: ARTEFACT

Guns! Gore! Galaxies!

★★★☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!
438 pages | Paperback/ebook
Author **Jamie Sawyer**
Publisher **Orbit**

Science fiction can be smart, provocative and thought-provoking – but there's also plenty of room for high-octane adventure featuring explosions, escapes and slavering aliens to kill. The latest book aiming to satisfy those with a desire for pulpy action is this opening volume of a new saga from debut author Jamie Sawyer.

The story is set in a future where mankind battles a vicious alien race using simulants – cloned, remotely-operated soldiers who can die in battle countless times. Simulant operator Captain Conrad Harris has experienced death so many times he's nicknamed "Lazarus", but a rescue mission to a distant world brings him face to face with an alien artefact and a potential "true" death...

Fast-paced and full of action, *The Lazarus War: Artefact* makes no pretence at originality, heavily referencing everything from *Edge Of Tomorrow* to *Aliens*, and the book struggles to overcome thin characterisation and melodramatic dialogue. Thankfully, the propulsive narrative keeps the book moving, and while it lags behind space thrillers like James SA Corey's *Expanse* saga, it's still an entertaining slice of retro sci-fi adventure. **Saxon Bullock**

i Jamie Sawyer got the idea for *Artefact* researching drone warfare, and getting interested in the stress of an operator.



SET PHASERS TO STUN

Where everyone has gone before

★★★½☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!
281 pages | **Paperback/ebook**
Author **Marcus Berkmann**
Publisher **Little, Brown**

***SFX* readers may not be the** ideal audience for this overview of 50 years of *Star Trek*. That's because, as author Marcus Berkmann says in his introduction, it's aimed squarely at the general reader, not "the deranged Trekkie" (guilty as charged). And there are some issues with that.

For one thing, it focuses on the original series, the movies, and *The Next Generation*, on the grounds that until JJ Abrams came along, the franchise's audience dwindled. If you're a fan of the later spin-off shows, you may be appalled at what short shrift they're given. *DS9* gets three and a half pages. *Voyager* gets four. *Enterprise* is dismissed in one and a half, with the author confessing that he gave up after two seasons. This explains why, early on, he grumbles that *Trek* has never explained why Klingons had bumpy foreheads in the movies but not on TV. Er, yes they did – *Enterprise* season four dedicated *a whole two-parter* to plugging this continuity gap.

With the exception of original series writer DC Fontana's dedication, there are also no fresh quotes. At times, as Berkmann cherrypicks from the likes of *Star Trek Memories* or *Inside Star Trek* you may wonder if you'd be better off reading them instead.

However, he's very good at mining his bibliography for spicy quotes (particularly when it comes to bitter former colleagues slating Gene Roddenberry) or quirky nuggets of trivia. His critical judgements (as he highlights standout episodes) are generally sound; when skewering *Trek* clichés he has a nice line in snark; and a personal perspective – as, for example, when he digresses to lament the day he took all his *Next Gen* VHS tapes to the dump – makes his prose very welcoming. So even if you are one of those "deranged Trekkies", you'll find yourself entertained. And if you're not, this is a very serviceable introduction. **Ian Berriman**

i Until last October Marcus Berkmann was *The Spectator*'s pop critic for 28 years, writing a staggering 345 monthly columns.



THE DESTRUCTIVES

A Boy And His Bot

★★★★½

RELEASED OUT NOW!
416 pages | **Paperback/ebook**
Author **Matthew De Abaitua**
Publisher **Angry Robot Books**

***The Destructives* takes the** reader on a journey that's epic and audaciously unpredictable, switching from one chewy plotline to the next. Then the author ties them all together with bows which he makes look maddeningly easy.

Humanity's been superseded by sun-orbiting AIs which have stolen our dreams of a future. Young Theodore, a man with deadened emotions, and an AI companion investigate a recreated house from the past. Here, a minor-seeming incident involving a mum and daughter on the net somehow changed history... but could it do so again?

This is a marvellously written book, whose invention and surprises gain momentum until its boggler of an ending. Seasoned SF readers may complain that the "virtual house" investigation in the first act reads like trad cyberpunk; similarly, the book's vision of shopping malls as giant asylums and shoppers as experimental lab rats is hardly new. However, these ideas (and many others) are presented and integrated with loving craft. And while for a long time the characters seem unsympathetic, more backstories than personalities, they're triumphantly infused with life in the later stages. Great stuff. **Andrew Osmond**

i The book shares the same universe (and a couple of characters) with De Abaitua's *The Red Men* and *If Then*.

BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS



FIREFLY DICTIONARY AND PHRASEBOOK

RELEASED 15 APRIL
160 pages | **Hardback**
Author **Monica Valentinelli**
Publisher **Titan Books**

- Full title: *The Gorram Shiniest Dictionary And Phrasebook In The 'Verse*.
- Yes, nearly 14 years later after it was axed, Joss Whedon's short-lived SF series is still inspiring companion books!
- Browncoats will love a comprehensive guide to all the Mandarin phrases used throughout the series (many of them outrageous insults).
- There's an interesting interview with the show's Chinese translator too, (who also voiced *Serenity*'s computer).
- That stuff only amounts to 19 pages, though. The rest is a glossary featuring 'Verse idioms like "Earth-that-was", plus the names of characters, vessels and places.
- Many other terms covered – like "airlock", "gunplay" or, er, "beans" – don't really require definition, frankly.



Reviews



MALADAPTED

The Big Issues

★★★★½

RELEASED 7 APRIL
313 pages | **Paperback/ebook**
Author **Richard Kurti**
Publisher **Walker Books**

***Maladapted* opens in** incendiary fashion, with a vivid terror attack on a packed metro train. It's an event that has dramatic repercussions for the book's protagonists: Cillian, a gifted young student who walks away from the carnage with barely a scratch, and Tess, the radicalised teenager who planted the bomb.

As this premise implies, Richard Kurti's YA novel (for readers 12 and above) doesn't shrink from tackling some pretty big, inflammatory issues. As well as religious fanaticism, there are meditations on eugenics, big pharma, consumerism, the welfare state, tech-fetishism, the dark web and more.

Except "meditations" does Kurti a disservice, because what's striking is how lightly *Maladapted* wears all these weighty concerns, using them to power a taut, pacy thriller that takes us from the sky walkways of a futuristic city to a remote gothic fortress housing a terrible secret.

At the heart of the story is the fascinating dynamic between the victim and perpetrator of a terrorist atrocity, as Cillian and Tess are forced into a brittle alliance against the forces of darkness. For a kids' book, *Maladapted* has some very grown-up ideas.

Paul Kirkley

Richard Kurti's other credits include *Primeval*, *Sinbad*, *Wolfblood* and Sky's Terry Pratchett adap *Going Postal*.



KNIGHTS OF THE BORROWED DARK

Little orphan Deni

★★★½☆

RELEASED 7 APRIL
268 pages | **Paperback/ebook**
Author **Dave Rudden**
Publisher **Puffin**

When you've got a name like Denizen Hardwick, your parents died under mysterious circumstances and home is an orphanage on a stormy outcrop on the Irish coast, chances are you're the lead character in a children's book. Lo and behold, this particular Denizen is – and when an aunt he had no idea existed suddenly sends someone to pick him up, he's about to find out that he's got special powers to help him fight evil shadows.

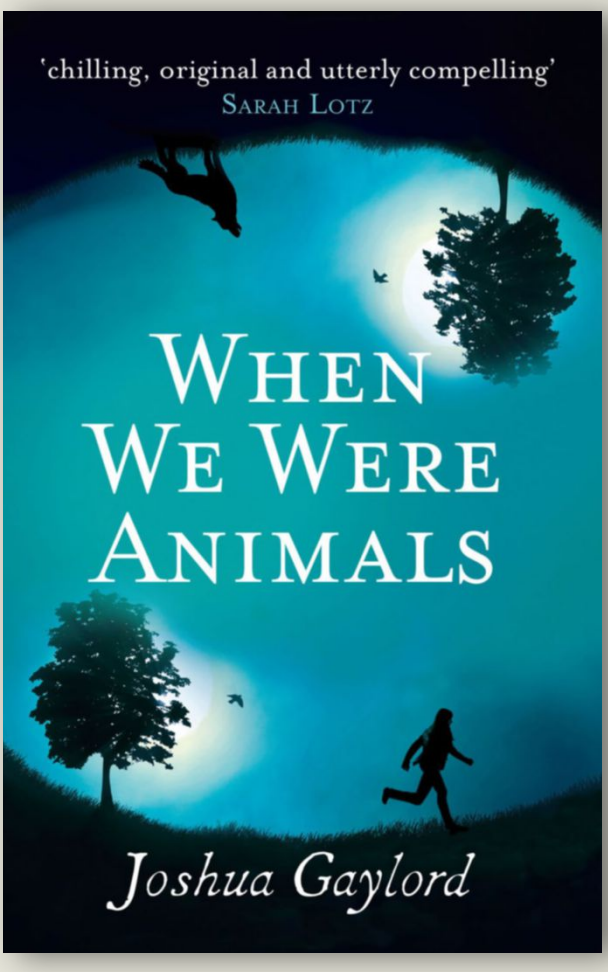
Okay, we'll stop mincing words: this is a story you've read before. It's an archetype. That doesn't make it bad, however, and author Dave Rudden has a bit of fun mocking the concept of a "chosen one" along the way, too, letting us know that he's in on the joke. *Knights Of The Borrowed Dark* also features some rather marvellous dialogue and prose, in much the same style as Derek Landy or Darren Shan, which will appeal to kids of all ages. The only problem is that it isn't consistently marvellous: too much of the book is made up of exposition, and it only really comes alive when nasty clockwork monsters leap off the page at you. But the fact they do that so very, very well helps a *lot*. **Jayne Nelson**

Rudden found out he'd sold the book to publishers when "in a Poundworld... counting the change in my pocket."

WHSmith

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HOT PTERODACTYL BOYFRIEND

On The Wings Of Love

★★★☆☆

RELEASED 7 APRIL

416 pages | Paperback/ebook

Author **Alan Cumyn**

Publisher **Simon & Schuster Children's**

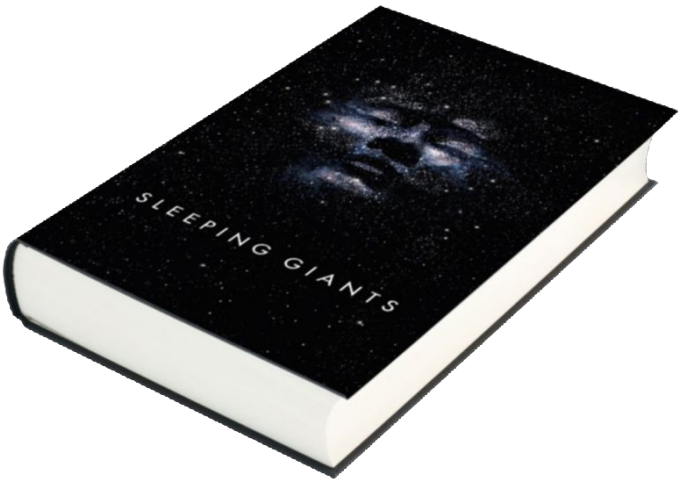
There's no denying this book probably has the catchiest title of the year, not to mention a truly stunning cover. Your first instinct will be to assume that it can't live up to either – and in a way, you'd be right.

Yes, it's aimed at the Young Adult market and is a coming-of-age tale featuring a teenage girl falling for an unusual new boy at her school. Yes, said newbie is irresistible, despite being "different". And yes, it's got all the usual teen tropes.

But... Something here is as "off" as a pterodactyl named Pyke going to classes. Our narrator, school busybody Shiels, isn't the average everygirl you usually find in these kind of stories; if anything, she's bloody annoying. She doesn't spend the entire book staring into Pyke's eyes: she only occasionally interacts with him. And the tone, far from being jokey or wry as the title would suggest, is downbeat, even unpleasant. This isn't a fun, comedic romp; it's as psychologically disturbing as, well, dating a leathery reptile in real life.

All of this actually makes the book both fascinating *and* repellent – and much harder to dismiss than you'd expect. Quite a feat. **Jayne Nelson**

i Scientists estimate that the largest pterosaurs could go 67mph. Today, a peregrine falcon can reach 200mph.



SLEEPING GIANTS

Does it deserve a big hand?

★★★☆☆

RELEASED 21 APRIL

306 pages | Hardback/paperback/ebook

Author **Sylvain Neuvel**

Publisher **Del Rey**

Having your book optioned for a movie before it's even been published is most authors' dream, so well done to Canadian writer Sylvaine Neuvel on his debut, *Sleeping Giants*.

As a young girl, Rose Franklin falls into a hole containing a giant alien hand. Years later, she ends up on a research project examining this device. After it's discovered to be part of a huge robot, a government conspiracy is set in train to retrieve the rest of the parts for the US before anyone else can figure out what's happening.

The mode of storytelling is the book's most engaging aspect: it's a modern-day form of the epistolary novel, told mostly as a series of interviews with various characters and the mysterious, never-named head of the project. For the most part it works well, although credibility is stretched in several segments where the unnamed puppetmaster is listening in on live events, as characters describe in exacting detail what's happening to them in unrealistic fashion.

> "Not in the same league as *The Martian*"

The publisher likens the story to *Interstellar*, *The Martian* and *Gravity*, but it's not in the same league. *Sleeping Giants* provides a fraction of the fascinating, real-life science of *The Martian*, for example. Essentially, the story is the finding of an anime-style mecha, with a love triangle as the main plot drive. The Quebecois linguist character is so borderline Mary Sue it comes close to grating.

And not very much really happens in terms of brain-popping SF. There's a lot of running about that feels a tad like stuffing. It's part one of a larger story that perhaps could have been much compressed. As a result, even as the prose style propels you to the end, you realise you're not going to get much bang for your buck. Fun, but far from essential. **Guy Haley**

i The book was optioned by Sony last year. David Koepp (*Jurassic Park*, *Spider-Man*) is adapting it into a screenplay.



PERIJEE & ME

With friends like these...

★★½☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

208 pages | Paperback/ebook

Author **Ross Montgomery**

Publisher **Faber & Faber**

In Disney's *Lilo & Stitch*, an awkward, lonely girl finds friendship with a lost alien creature who manages to cause havoc. In the similarly-titled *Perijee & Me*, an awkward, lonely girl finds friendship with... well, that'd be telling. But there's definitely havoc.

Caitlin is an energetic but lonely child, ostracised at school and ignored by her parents. After a meteor shower leaves the nearby beaches covered in sealife, she finds a tiny creature which quickly evolves, grows and learns from Caitlin. Convinced she's finally found the companionship she's been pining for (as well as a way to reconnect with her scientist father), Caitlin takes Perijee under her wing, before unwittingly unleashing his inner monster on the world...

Perijee & Me is often silly in a way young children are likely to find hysterically funny, but it's a fine line between silly and annoying for older readers. Caitlin's a textbook example of a naive narrator, and her eternal optimism and utter lack of self-awareness quickly grate. By the end, it's a lovely, touching look at friendship... so long as you ignore the millions of people whose lives were destroyed. But Caitlin doesn't really pay attention to this, so maybe we're not meant to either. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i Perijee is named after the point in the Moon's orbit when it's closest to the Earth (though that's spelt perigee).

Reviews



THE SIGN OF ONE

O Brother, Where Art Thou?

★★★★☆

RELEASED 7 APRIL

390 pages | Paperback/ebook

Author **Eugene Lambert**

Publisher **Electric Monkey**

Sometimes you don't need to reinvent the wheel, just make a really, really good wheel. Debut novelist Eugene Lambert merrily delivers a whole bunch of YA tropes in a classic three-act structure with *The Sign Of One*, but he does it with style, wit, pace and a strong central premise.

Kyle is an unexceptional kid growing up on a harsh, totalitarian, dumping-ground planet for back-of-the-queue human colonists, where twins are reviled. One out of every pair will become an evil monster during adolescence, so young twins are forced into labour camps until the signs start showing; then the evil twin is killed and the other becomes an outcast. When Kyle is shot in the face, but recovers, his mum has something she needs to tell him...

Yes, there's a bit of a "chosen one" vibe, but don't groan. There's a twist. It's not a destiny anyone would want to be chosen for. And there are a lot more surprises too.

The Sign Of One is wonderfully gruesome in places, and benefits from scarred, laconic and selfish but ultimately likeable heroes. And now the standard setting-up devices have been ticked off, it'll be very interesting to see where the series goes next.

Dave Golder

1 Two of the resistance leaders are called Ballard and LeGuin, surely in tribute to authors JG Ballard and Ursula Le Guin.

REISSUES

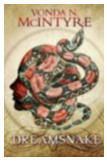
The pick of this month's paperbacks is Kim Stanley Robinson's **AURORA** (★★★★★, 7 April, Orbit).



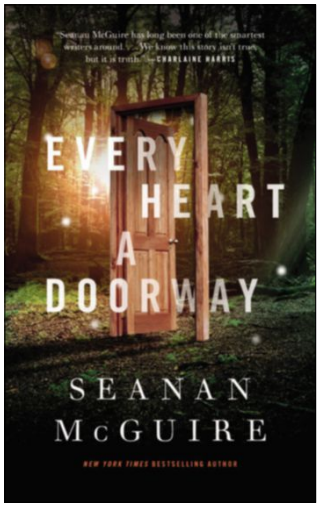
Following people living on a sub-light speed ship as they travel towards a distant star system – and their travails when they finally arrive – it's told from the perspective of the ship's AI. We said: "An accessible yet subtly experimental novel packed with big ideas, wonders, jeopardy and, at the end, a real emotional punch." Meanwhile, Adrian Tchaikovsky's **CHILDREN OF TIME** (★★★½☆, 21 April, Pan)



sees the survivors of a dying Earth leaving for a terraformed planet, only to discover it has new masters: a race of uplifted spiders. Quick! Deploy the giant rolled-up newspaper! We said: "Tchaikovsky favours a rather didactic style, which robs the narrative of a certain mystery, and the set-up requires some stretching of credibility. But overall this is a smart, involving story with a brilliantly imagined 'alien' race." Finally, there's a long-overdue reissue for Vonda N McIntyre's **DREAMSNAKE** (4 April, Jo Fletcher Books), which swept the Hugo, Nebula and Locus Awards when published in 1978. Set in a tribal, post-apocalyptic future, it follows a healer in search of a new "dreamsnake" – a serpent whose venom can ease suffering by inducing hallucinations. Somewhat rambly and languid, it's an unusual book (for its time) in many ways, featuring a compassionate feminine protagonist, a character whose gender is never specified, and a case of child sexual abuse.



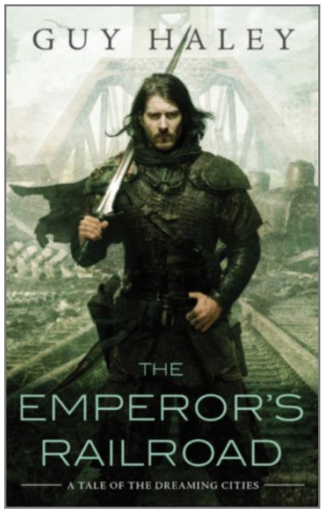
STORIES AT THE RIGHT LENGTH



Every Heart a Doorway

Children have always disappeared under the right conditions; slipping through the shadows under a bed or at the back of a wardrobe, tumbling down rabbit holes and into old wells, and emerging somewhere . . . else.

But magical lands have little need for used-up miracle children . . .



The Emperor's Railroad

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DARK KNIGHT III: THE MASTER RACE

Frankly, it's not a masterpiece

★★★☆☆

RELEASED **OUT NOW!**
Publisher **DC Comics**
Writers **Frank Miller, Brian Azzarello**
Artists **Andy Kubert, Frank Miller, Eduardo Risso, John Romita Jr**

ISSUES 1-3 **Few comic books can** match the reputation of Frank Miller's landmark Batman story *The Dark Knight Returns*. Highly influential, it's a classic that's already had one follow-up – the deeply flawed *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* (*DK2*). Now DC are giving us another instalment, in time to capitalise on the Miller-esque movie action of *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*.

However, while Miller's name is front and centre on the credits of *Dark Knight III: The Master Race*, he's only contributing a small amount of art, and his pre-release interviews have cast doubt on how much of *DK3* he actually wrote, suggesting this is largely co-writer Brian Azzarello's show.

Set three years after the events of *DK2*, this eight-issue miniseries sees the return of Batman to the streets of Gotham, just as the science experiments of Ray "The Atom" Palmer accidentally release a horde of crazed Kryptonian religious fundamentalists from the bottle city of Kandor.

A worldwide rampage soon begins, and there's only one hero who can stop it – but while the series has its attention-grabbing moments, it mostly steers away from the crazier, more incoherent elements of Miller's work on *DK2* and *All-Star Batman & Robin*. Instead, *DK3* is a focused comic-book thriller executed with plenty of style, and only occasionally dragged down by some clanging dialogue.

Each issue features a back-up story illustrated by a guest artist (with the first done by Miller himself); meanwhile main series artist Andy Kubert does his best Miller impersonation, capturing the right visual style.



> "A focused thriller with plenty of style"

However, as with *DK2*, the broader perspective on the entire DC Universe means *The Master Race* loses the sense of focus that gave *The Dark Knight Returns* its impact and power. An early, potentially fascinating plot twist is quickly reversed for a more traditional set-up, while the story's only truly controversial aspect treads worryingly close to territory covered in Miller's 2011 graphic novel *Holy Terror*. *DK3* will sell in epic quantities, but despite its slick and efficient storytelling, there's little to distinguish this from the avalanche of other *Dark Knight*-influenced grim superhero sagas.

Saxon Bullock

i Due on 20 April: *Dark Knight Returns: The Last Crusade*, set 10 years before *DKR*, which depicts the death of Jason Todd.



SPIDER-WOMAN

Great responsibility

★★★★★

RELEASED **OUT NOW!**
Publisher **Marvel Comics**
Writer **Dennis Hopeless**
Artist **Javier Rodriguez**

ISSUES 1-4 **Some ideas are so** perfect it's hard to imagine why they weren't done sooner. *Saga* fans may quibble over how original *Spider-Woman*'s pregnancy-tracking narrative is, but it's one thing to create an indie comic centred on incoming parenthood and quite another to knock up one of your longest-running icons, as Marvel have done with ex-Avenger Jessica Drew.

Thankfully, *Spider-Woman* isn't just a brilliant concept, it's also an excellent comic. Full of warmth, humour and action, it's a beautiful book, packed with visual imagination.

It begins with Jessica on the sidelines of battle, itching to get involved, but knowing she has to protect her baby. We're fed key information via seamless flashbacks, before the main arc kicks in, with Jessica visiting an intergalactic maternity ward as it's invaded by some very unwelcome visitors.

It's a deceptively simple set-up, into which, over the course of the first four issues, Dennis Hopeless fits themes ranging from single-motherhood and female friendship to the stresses of maintaining a work-life balance. Combine that with artist Javier Rodriguez's goosebump-inducing setpieces and you've got a comic with great genes.

Sam Ashurst

i To get his pregnancy facts right, Dennis Hopeless "sort of interviewed" his wife, as well as his mum and sister.



The One Show: always captivating.

LIMBO

Voodoo People

★★★★☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!
Publisher **Image Comics**
Writer **Dan Watters**
Artist **Caspar Wijngaard**

ISSUES 1-5 **Resembling a cross** between *Phonogram* and *Neuromancer*, there's much that feels very familiar about this noir-esque series, from amnesiac private detective Clay to the "music is magic" mantra of voodoo expert Sandy.

Main location Dedande City turns out to be an adjunct of the Televerse, a virtual domain that owes as much to *Tron* and '80s computer games as it does to *The Matrix*. A scene of our hero being swallowed up by his television is straight out of David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*, and there's a wry reference to *Toy Story* in the form of Clay's trusty action figure Mado, which turns out to have not just sentimental value.

But Dan Watters and Caspar Wijngaard bring those well-worn elements together with a good deal of verve and wit. With his fluid figurework, Wijngaard channels both Jamie McKelvie and Jaime Hernandez, keeping his panel layouts tight for the city scenes before really cutting loose when the story crosses over to the digital realm.

Five issues into this initial six-part run, some deft twists are revealed, setting the stage perfectly for what will hopefully be a fitting finale. Let's hope Clay and Sandy aren't left in limbo for long.

Stephen Jewell

i The creators have five volumes of *Limbo* planned, each of which "would take on a slightly different genre".



Maybe he left a blue sock in the wash...?

STAR TREK: THE CLASSIC UK COMICS

Trek, Jim, but not as we know it

★★★★☆

RELEASED 14 APRIL
Publisher **IDW Publishing**
Writers **Angus Allan and others**
Artists **Harry F Lindfield, Ron Turner, John Canning**

COLLECTION (VOL 1) **After 50 years** you might imagine that the final frontier is all too finite. Surely every last detail of *Star Trek* history has been sensor-scanned, every dilithium deposit excavated, every Tribble in the cosmos spayed?

Think again. This collection of long-lost British comic strips reminds us there are still strange new worlds to discover. And they were rarely stranger than these.

Originally seen in the ever-merging pages of *Joe 90*, *TV 21* and *Valiant*, the strip brought *Trek* to Blighty six months ahead of its BBC premiere in the summer of '69. It's a parallel five-year mission, taken from a cracked mirror universe seemingly summoned into existence by mighty beings who overheard someone talking *Trek* in the boozer one night.

> "Have a giddy, pulpy charm"

Canon violations fly like photon torpedoes: in early instalments it's Captain Kurt who commands the Enterprise. The starship lands on planets – its crew disembarking by ramp – and dives underwater (hi, JJ Abrams!). Perplexingly, McCoy cries, "For Pete's sake, Scott! You can't afford to be so emotional!"

It's Technicolor *Trek* from an age where the 23rd century was beamed to the UK in black and white. Filled with sabre-toothed sea monsters and giant ants, propelled by glorious art, these off-key adventures have a giddy, pulpy charm. Unbound by the show's lore, they're a true journey into the uncharted reaches. **Nick Setchfield**

i Writer Angus Allan penned nearly every strip in '70s kids mag *Look-In*, including *Space: 1999* and *Buck Rogers*.



With puns like that: please leave.

SOONER OR LATER

Back In The DHSS

★★★½☆

RELEASED 7 APRIL
Publisher **Rebellion**
Writer **Peter Milligan**
Artists **Brendan McCarthy Jamie Hewlett**

GRAPHIC NOVEL **The bulk of** *Sooner Or Later* was originally published as a series of single-page strips in *2000 AD*. That's an unusual format for the venerable anthology. Then again, this is an unusual strip...

In Thatcher's Britain, Swifty is jobless and broke. A chance encounter leads to him being whisked off to the 30th century, where he finds himself stumbling into all manner of surreal scrapes.

Together, Peter Milligan and Brendan McCarthy created some of the most intriguing British comics of the late '80s/early '90s. *Sooner Or Later* feels slighter than, say, *Rogan Josh*; it's largely a string of jokes and pop references. And yet it proved quietly revolutionary for the often battle-driven *2000 AD*.

McCarthy's art is stellar throughout, with a manic energy that threatens to erupt from every panel. The initial strips are crisply detailed – almost realistic – while things get looser and weirder in the colour episodes. Also included is the sequel "Swifty's Return", drawn by Jamie Hewlett.

Some of the jokes have lost their sting, but this volume is a fascinating time capsule, with a current of punk rage about the Tory government of the time. Maybe it's time for a new series, eh? **Will Salmon**

i Also included in the book are two solo interviews with Milligan and McCarthy about their history with comics.

THE WALKING DEAD: MICHONNE Episode One

Walking back to hacky mess

★★★½☆

RELEASED **OUT NOW!**
Reviewed on **PS4**
Also on **Xbox One, PC, PS3, 360, Mobile**
Publisher **Telltale Games**

VIDEOGAME **Telltale's latest is a** departure. Instead of the five-episode format that worked so well for seasons one and two, it's a three-part "miniseries". It also abandons the cast that the studio spent so long cultivating, shifting the focus to katana-wielding melancholic Michonne.

But in other ways this first part, titled *In Too Deep*, feels like more of the same. A stylised opening sets up our lead's traumatic past and damaged present, but it plays out in an extended QTE scuffle with a throng of Walkers. These encounters are as grisly as ever, but so little has changed since 2012 that the impact has been lost.

Of course, you're soon tussling with the living too. This first episode revolves around a scavenging mission gone wrong, with three sets of survivors all after the same goods. As the tension escalates, mistrust reigns, and you'll spend much of your time navigating dialogue trees as you try to figure out not only who's telling you the truth, but who you can share the truth of your own circumstances with.

But, across barely 90 minutes of playtime, there's disappointingly little opportunity to see the consequences of these decisions play out in meaningful ways. That's partly because, rather than depicting a self-contained incident in a larger story arc, *In Too Deep* is simply part one of the narrative.

With so much mistrust and mystery, decision-making can feel like guesswork, but it certainly generates intrigue, and we're eager to learn the fate of everyone's favourite sourpuss swordswoman. A competent enough opening part, with strong vocal performances, but we're yet to see the flair we'd hoped for. **James Nouch**

i Michonne is voiced by Samira Wiley, who plays Poussey Washington in *Orange Is The New Black*.



Michonne does her best Larry David face.



Link learns new attacks, and needs 'em!

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS HD

Wolf down a second helping

★★★★½

RELEASED **OUT NOW!**
Reviewed on **Wii U**
Publisher **Nintendo**

VIDEOGAME **Time is cruel** to us all, but especially so to videogames. This is why HD remakes tend to be reserved for fan favourites; the rose-tinted glasses do most of the work. But *Twilight Princess*, while critically loved and a sales success, is the black sheep of the *Zelda* family. Without *Wind Waker*'s charm, can this revisit serve up anything more than a wasteland?

HD ports are often reserved for set-in-stone classics, serving simply to reinforce what we already knew. Our lasting memory of *Twilight Princess* was of its weaker elements, the dourness and the unsteady first steps; but replaying it reminds us that the game is much more than this. What strikes us now is the magic of the place: a world where a horse-riding hero can become a lupine steed to his own impish jockey (your sidekick, Midna, takes great pleasure exploiting your wolf form), where spirits of ancient warriors are summoned by howling at the moon, and where dark things brew in remote mountain retreats. *Wind Waker HD* may bring us more nostalgic comfort, but rediscovering one of the weirder *Zeldas* is a thrill. **Matthew Castle**

i Careful with that Ganondorf Amiibo: tapping him on the gamepad doubles the damage you take.

DEATHWATCH: OVERKILL

Another bug hunt

★★★★☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

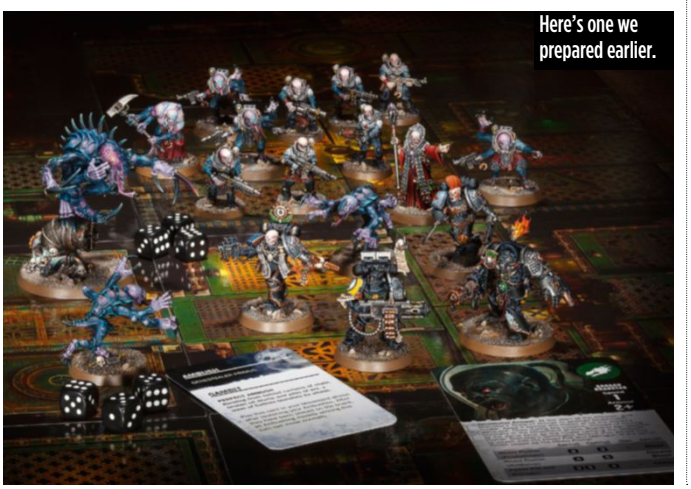
Two players

Publisher **Games Workshop**

BOARDGAME **Gamers of a certain** age have fond memories of classic Games Workshop boardgame *Space Hulk*; that saw a squad of heavily armed but wildly outnumbered Space Marines taking on hordes of Genestealers. It was great – a *Warhammer 40,000* riff on *Aliens*, and faster and more accessible than its parent game.

On the surface, *Deathwatch: Overkill* looks like an update. The Deathwatch (essentially, a Space Marine All-Stars, with each member boasting a different speciality) must do battle with an insidious Genestealer cult. But this is a subtly different and far more violent game than *Space Hulk*.

Quick and easy to pick up (though not to assemble – seriously, you'll need to set aside a week just to glue everything together), the game follows a phase-based structure. The Genestealers set traps, and then both sides move and shoot. The Marines will initially slaughter their enemies, but the tide can quickly turn, with the cult only needing to take out a couple of Marines to win. It's actually fairly well-balanced, if rather slight. It's also missing *Space Hulk*'s sense of claustrophobia, and the rules occasionally lack nuance. And while expansion packs will no doubt follow, nine scenarios feels a little measly for £100.



Here's one we prepared earlier.

But then most won't be buying this for the game – they'll be buying it for the 50 astonishingly beautiful figures. There are 11 Deathwatch Marines, ranging from a bulky Terminator to a guy on a motorbike with accompanying cyber-eagle, while the Cult gets some mutants, a couple of purestrain Genestealers, two characters and the massive Patriarch – essentially the Alien Queen except, presumably, with a willy. They're all compatible with *Warhammer 40,000* and the Deathwatch Kill-Team especially makes an impressive addition to a Marine army. That's what most fans will be buying this set for. The game itself is almost an added bonus. **Will Salmon**

i Genestealers were originally going to be of unknown origin, but were retconned into being a scouting force for the Tyranids.

DOCTOR WHO: DOOM COALITION 2

Rubber lovers bounce back

★★★☆☆

RELEASED OUT NOW!

230 minutes | CD/download

Publisher **Big Finish**

AUDIO DRAMA **As far as *Who*** villains go, it's difficult to get more obscure than the Voord, the rubber-suited aliens who only notched up one on-screen appearance in 1964 adventure "The Keys Of Marinus". Now, in the wake of their role in last year's Paul Cornell-written comic miniseries *Four Doctors*, the Voord make another comeback in the first instalment of *Doom Coalition 2*, Big Finish's latest set.

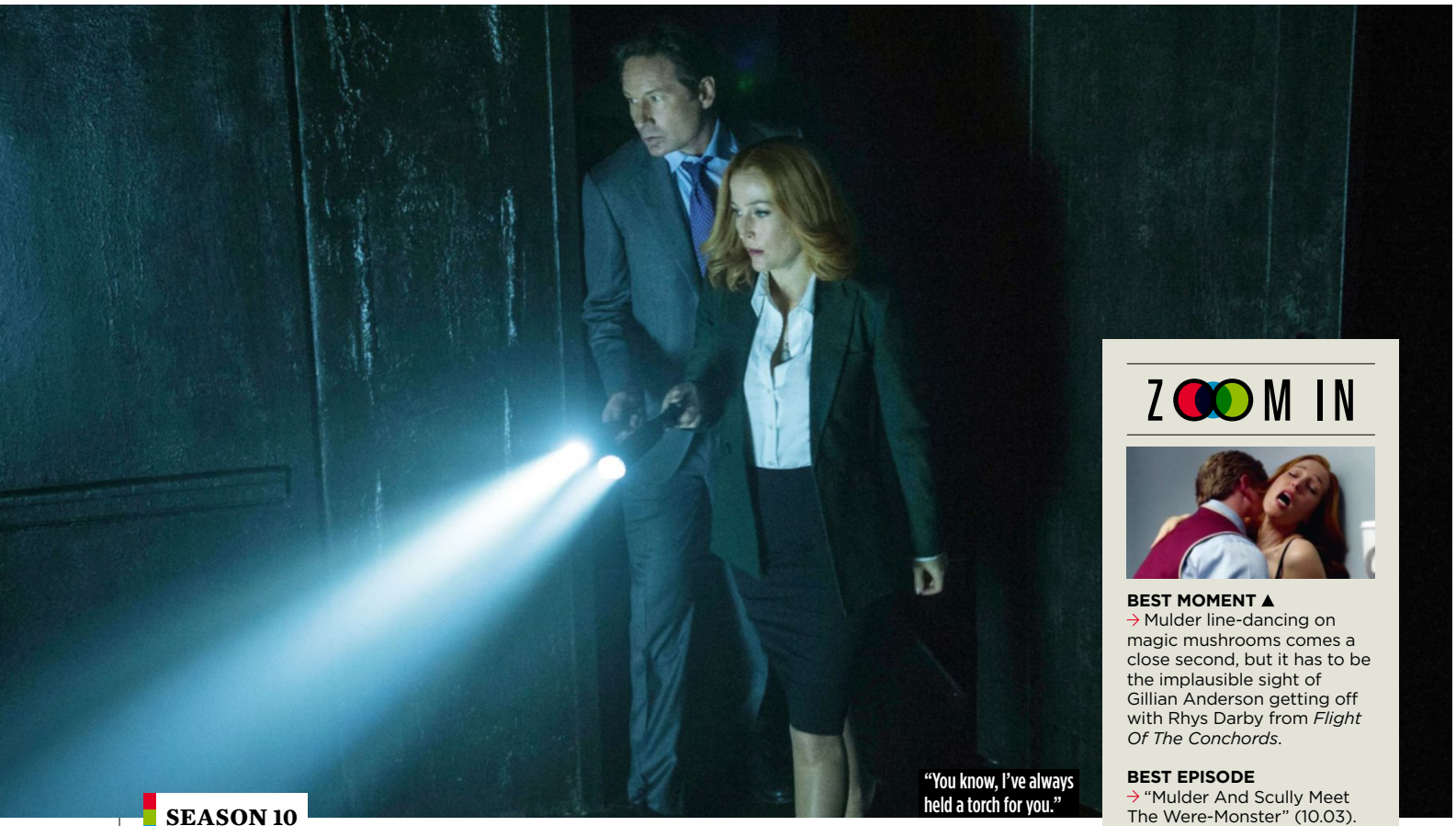
Once again, it's a quartet of interlinked stories, which follow the Eighth Doctor (Paul McGann) and companions Liv Chenka (Nicola Walker) and Helen Sinclair (Hattie Morahan) in the aftermath of their initial confrontation with the Eleven (Mark Bonnar), a demented Time Lord supervillain with multiple personalities. This time, the time-travellers are pitched against an even greater galaxy-threatening adversary with a mysterious link to the Eleven.

The set starts well, with the two opening episodes pulling off a combination of action, intrigue and sparky dialogue. McGann is on excellent form in Voord-related adventure "Beachhead", while episode two – "Scenes From Her Life" – sets up interesting stakes for the rest of the saga. Unfortunately, final episodes "The Gift" and "The Sonomancer" don't quite pay this off, delivering fun but occasionally clunky adventures dragged down by excessive melodrama.



It's good to hear Alex Kingston back as River Song in the final episode, although the over-convoluted plotting necessary to prevent River and the Eighth Doctor meeting hampers the story. It also doesn't help that the Eleven is too cartoonish to be a genuinely intimidating villain. With two more *Doom Coalition*-related sets to go, let's hope Big Finish can pull the saga back into shape for a rousing finish. **Saxon Bullock**

i Amicus Productions, who made the two '60s *Who* movies with Peter Cushing, also optioned "The Keys Of Marinus".



"You know, I've always held a torch for you."

SEASON 10

THE X-FILES

Crazy like a Fox

- UK Broadcast **Fox, finished**
- US Broadcast **Channel 5, finished**
- Episodes Reviewed **10.01-10.06**

Though frustratingly brief, this "event series" return for the classic '90s show does a good job of encapsulating its qualities – and not only its strengths, but also its weaknesses. It's nearly 14 years since Agents Mulder and Scully last took to the small screen, but that perspective doesn't seem to have facilitated any lesson-learning. Certainly, no one's taken creator Chris Carter to one side to whisper, "Knock the convoluted arc stuff on the head, eh?"

In a season of wildly fluctuating quality, the Carter-penned bookending instalments are the weakest link. There are so many things wrong with aptly-named opener "My Struggle" (it's a struggle to watch) that it's difficult to pinpoint the most egregious. Is it the scene where Mulder returns to his old FBI office to find his "I Want To Believe" poster lying on the floor, still in pristine condition? Is it the speed with which Mulder abandons decades of belief in an alien invasion conspiracy on the word of one young woman? Actually, no: it's when Duchovny is tasked with delivering a paranoid history of the post-war period in the manner of a man wearily reading out the chapter headings of *The Collected Works Of David Icke*. The pandemic-panic season-closer which continues the story isn't much better, but at least moves at a fair old clip.

After "My Struggle" the only way is up. Mutant-kids-with-telekinetic-powers tale "Founder's Mutation" (10.02) has "middling season two episode" written all over it, but at this distance from the '90s that induces a warm glow of nostalgia. There's something bracingly bonkers about the whiplash-inducing tonal shifts of

ZOOM IN

BEST MOMENT ▲
→ Mulder line-dancing on magic mushrooms comes a close second, but it has to be the implausible sight of Gillian Anderson getting off with Rhys Darby from *Flight Of The Conchords*.

BEST EPISODE
→ "Mulder And Scully Meet The Were-Monster" (10.03). By a country mile.

TRIVIA
→ Episode three is based on a script Darin Morgan wrote for the 2005 remake of *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* – which probably explains why Rhys Darby's "Guy Mann" is dressed *exactly* like Kolchak.

IT'S WOSSERNAME!
→ Lauren Ambrose (Agent Einstein) previously played PR slimeball Jilly Kitzinger in *Torchwood: Miracle Day*.

DID YOU SPOT? ▼
→ The name and dates of the late Kim Manners (who directed 52 episodes of the show) appear on a tombstone in "Mulder And Scully Meet The Were-Monster".



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Miller and Einstein are getting those Mulder and Scully poses off pat.

"Home Again" (10.04), which glues a soppy subplot about Scully's dying mother to an A-plot about homicidal street art, even though garbage-monster/social justice warrior Trashman isn't exactly in the same league as Candyman; we're meant to shiver at the sight of this bin juice-oozing bogeyman's discarded Band Aids, but a more likely response is a hearty guffaw. "Babylon" (10.05) is equally bizarre, mashing together comedy trip sequences for Fox with a slightly offensive *24*-style Islamist terror plot.

But all these bum notes are forgiven because of episode three, which props up the quality graph like a tentpole. Darin Morgan wrote many of the classic series' best eps, and while "Mulder And Scully Meet The Were-Monster" is not his best work, it's still hilarious and sweetly charming.

While the series also introduces a pair of own-brand Mulder and Scullys in the shape of young FBI agents Miller and Einstein, hopefully this is just an insurance policy (or a contract negotiation strategy...), because this season's one consistent strength is the interplay between Duchovny and Anderson. When given a chance to show his comedy chops Duchovny bats it out of the park, and Anderson is capable of breaking your heart; she's really honed her craft over all those years away from the genre. The Mulder and Scully relationship now has real depth, and the possibility that the two might strike out in search of William, the son they had to give up, is far more compelling than any flannel about chem trails and alien DNA. While much of this series retreads old ground, you sense there could be fresh territory to be explored in the strange world of parenthood. Here's hoping Duchovny and Anderson get the chance to investigate it. **Ian Berriman**

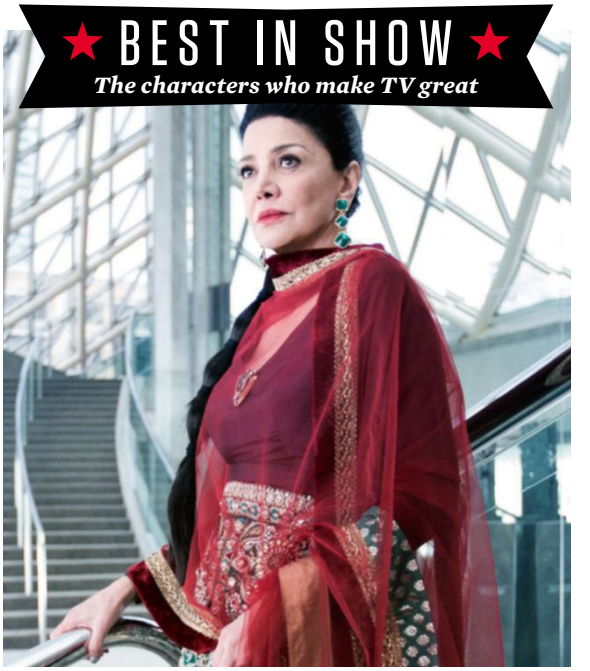
> "Carter's bookends are the weakest link"



Thank goodness he doesn't want to snog Mulder too.

BEST IN SHOW

The characters who make TV great



CHRISJEN AVASARALA

The Expanse's hard-as-nails UN badass

UK Broadcast **TBC** US Broadcast **Syfy, finished**

***The Expanse* is one of** the best shows to come out of the US for a long, long time, and, while it doesn't have a UK airdate as we write this, we're already waving the pom-poms and cheerleading its arrival. There are many reasons for our excitement: from its *Battlestar Galactica*-meets-*Blade Runner* vibe (aka spaceships and weary gumshoes) to its tension-filled action and fabulous cinematography, *The Expanse* is superb.

While there are plenty of brilliant characters to highlight here, we've gone for Shohreh Aghdashloo's enigmatic UN deputy undersecretary, Chrisjen Avasarala. She's without a doubt the most colourful character in an otherwise rather bleak-looking show, laden with bright silks, necklaces and earrings so heavy poor Aghdashloo's lobes are practically touching her shoulders. But don't let her glamour fool you into thinking she's style over substance: right from the off, you're never quite sure what Avasarala's up to. One moment she's playing with a grandchild and the next she's double-crossing a lifelong pal; she'll lie on her roof staring up at the stars admiring their beauty, and then she'll torture a terrorist without a thought for morality. "Complex" sums her up rather nicely, and a complex character is a *believable* one.

But there's another reason Avasarala's so watchable, and that's because the woman playing her is so brilliant. Aghdashloo could recite a phone book in her gravelly voice and make your hair stand on end; she's *that* good. She brings an earthly (pun fully intended) gravitas to one of the most powerful women in *The Expanse*'s solar system. Don't miss her, and don't miss this show. **Jayne Nelson**



Dance like there's no tomorrow – which there might not be...

SEASON 2

AGENT CARTER

Peggy goes to Hollywood

- UK Broadcast **Fox UK, until 31 March**
- US Broadcast **ABC, finished**
- Episodes Reviewed **2.01-2.10**

Here's a familiar sentence for readers of *SFX*: at time of writing, the fate of this show is uncertain. In fact, there's a good chance *Agent Carter won't* be back after this second season; Hayley Atwell has been cast in a new pilot and while she's said "ABC has assured me that it would be actually possible to do both," the signs are not good. Much of this year also aired in double-episode chunks, as though the network was racing to get it over with. Abandon hope, all ye who watch this.

Still, at least we got two wonderful years. And if anything *Agent Carter*'s second season is even better than the first: with all that infuriating sexism out of the way now she's proved herself to be a solid SSR Agent, Peggy has moved to Hollywood to fight evil using Howard Stark's mansion as her base and his butler as her sidekick. Not only is the new location refreshing (at least the show can be honest about being filmed in California and not New York now), the Carter/Jarvis double act is one of the warmest, loveliest partnerships on TV.

Which brings us to another of *Agent Carter*'s delights: the casting. Last season Jarvis's wife was an invisible presence rather like Arthur Daley's "'er indoors", but now we get to meet – and fall in love – with her, in the form of Lotte Verbeek. Then there's Jason Wilkes (Reggie Austin), who from his very first scene radiates charm and becomes a believable source of attraction for Peggy – who naturally always puts her job first. Wynn Everett also shines as the Hollywood glamourpuss with a secret penchant for nuclear research. All the actors seem to be having the time of their lives, probably because they're working with such energetic scripts – the dialogue, action and plotting are all as lively as the flamingo poor Jarvis keeps trying to catch in Howard's gardens.

Agent Carter is, above all else, *fun*, and at its midst stands Atwell's indomitable, formidable and ultimately adorable Peggy... who, as we know, will continue her work for generations to come. At least we were lucky enough to spy on some of it, eh? **Jayne Nelson**

ZOOM IN

BEST MOMENT ▲
→ "A Little Song And Dance" (2.09) features exactly that: a dance number!

BEST EPISODE
→ "Smoke And Mirrors" (2.04) reveals Peggy's past. We see her working at Bletchley Park, celebrating her engagement and looking set for a life of suburban wifery... until her brother's death inspires her to join the SOE. Atwell, as always, is heartbreaking when she cries.

TRIVIA
→ The character of Whitney Frost is loosely based on Hedy Lamarr: the screen siren was a genius who invented an early version of Wi-Fi.

BEST DIALOGUE
→ Peggy on Howard Stark's film audiences: "But they're ready for a movie based on a comic book. Sounds like a dreadful idea."

IT'S WOSSISNAME! ▼
→ Kurtwood Smith, who plays Vernon Masters, is probably best known for swearing a lot as the bad guy in *RoboCop*.



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LINE UP

The month's most quotable dialogue

SCULLY
"I think maybe my phone isn't working right, as guys don't send me pictures of their junk on it."
The X-Files, Episode 10.03



RICK
"It is pretty stupid for us to go out there, isn't it?"

DARYL
"Yeah. Do it again tomorrow?"
The Walking Dead, Episode 6.10



RAY PALMER
"He's a time master from the 22nd century. It's a little hard to google."
Legends Of Tomorrow, Episode 1.01



FELICITY
"How is it that you always manage to blame yourself for everything?"

DIGGLE
"That's his superpower. Guilt Arrow."
Arrow, Episode 4.12



LUCIFER
"I was promised a gang war but instead I get a cry baby. This is boring."
Lucifer, Episode 1.05



SCRIPTEASE

A TV season distilled

SEASON 2

THE FLASH

He's the most sensitive man alive...



- UK Broadcast **Sky 1, Tuesdays**
- US Broadcast **The CW, Tuesdays**
- Episodes Reviewed **2.01-2.14**

BARRY ALLEN (VO)
My name is Barry Allen. I am the Flash. I hunted down the man who killed my mother, but in doing so I opened up our world to new threats that could kill every mother on the planet... Er, sorry.

DR CAITLIN SNOW
Although Barry is a forensic scientist, he's not smart enough to develop his powers on his own. So he gets help from us here at STAR Labs. We're plenty smart.

BARRY ALLEN
You're just not smart enough to lock the front door of your super high-tech, multi-billion-dollar facility. Any random citizen of Central City can walk in here and learn my secret identity.

JAY GARRICK
Not just any random citizen... As the Flash of Earth-Two, I'm here to help Barry defeat Zoom, the villain who stole my speed and now seeks to steal his.

DR HARRISON WELLS
You'll help him until I return to the show, and then you'll be made immediately redundant – MR GUEST STAR.

DR CAITLIN SNOW
Don't worry, Jay. You can be my new boyfriend. It's been almost two weeks since my husband and soul mate Ronnie Raymond died in the singularity that Barry created over our city.

It's dinner time at the WEST family home.

IRIS WEST
I used to look after and help my socially awkward stepbrother Barry. But now that he's a speedster, there's not much left for me to do in this town.

JOE WEST
Well, worry no longer, now you have another brother you can help, Iris – your long lost sibling Wally West!

WALLY WEST
I like racing cars. Speed is everything to me. You might say there's not much more to my personality.

IRIS WEST
Yup, there's absolutely no chance that Wally could also become a speedster. No foreshadowing here. None.

Somewhere on Earth-Two...

BARRY ALLEN
Why does Cisco get all of the best lines while all I do is follow orders from Team Flash, run around a bit, and cry tears every week?

CISCO RAMON
Because we've seen what happens when this show tries to give other characters snappy one-liners.

KILLER FROST
Hello, gentlemen! Ready to cool off? Have time to chill out? I've got an "ice" day planned for us!

CISCO RAMON
Has someone been watching *Batman & Robin*?

BARRY
[sighs] THIS is what happens when our most interesting villain is such a fan-favourite character that he gets his very own spin-off show... I miss Captain Cold.

Meanwhile, on DC'S LEGENDS OF TOMORROW...

CAPTAIN COLD
[Shaking his head and scoffing at the absurdities of this week's plot] I can't believe I left THE FLASH for this... God help me, I miss Barry.

Joseph McCabe

SFX's SPURIOUS AWARDS

Celebrating the silliest and strangest moments from the month in TV



POLITICAL SATIRE OF THE MONTH

The Legends of Tomorrow discover a future in which Putin is forced by international law to make gay marriage legal in Russia.



BECHDEL TEST FAIL OF THE MONTH

"So, do you think Barry will notice me more if I enlarge my breasts this much?" Patty asks Iris in *The Flash*.



LIVE-ACTION GAME ADAP OF THE MONTH

We thought we were watching Syfy's jolly space op *Killjoys*. But no, it was in fact a backdoor pilot for a *Portal* series.



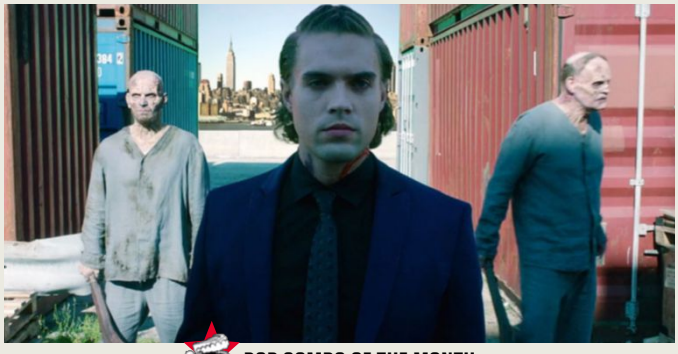
PLEASE DON'T... TOO LATE! OF THE MONTH

This looks like a werewolf giving fellatio to a corpse in *Grimm*. In fact, we're not entirely clear that it *isn't*...



CRAP GAMESHOW OF THE MONTH

It looks like the organisers of the new live *Crystal Maze* experience have had a budget cut in *Lucky Man*.



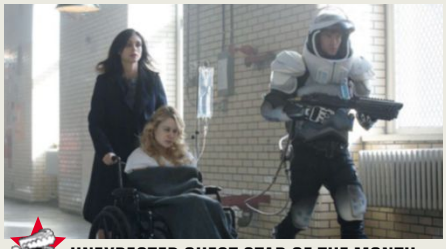
POP COMBO OF THE MONTH

As Justin Bieber ages and starts to lose his looks, he chooses backing dancers that won't outshine him in *Shadowhunters*.



FACE OF THE MONTH

Jarvis is definitely going to leave some skin on that window when they peel him out of the car in *Agent Carter*.



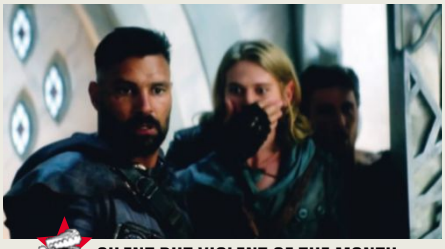
UNEXPECTED GUEST STAR OF THE MONTH

Buzz Lightyear goes to infinity and Arkham in *Gotham*.



STITCH-UP OF THE MONTH

Early attempt at creating Frankenstein's monster in *Beowulf*.



SILENT BUT VIOLENT OF THE MONTH

Mage farts in *The Shannara Chronicles*.

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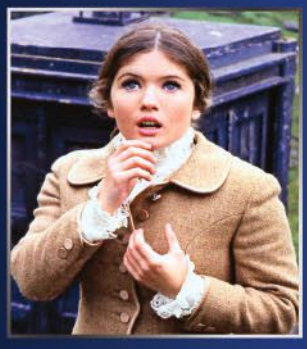


ROBERT ENGLUND
NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

MICHAEL BIEHN
ALIENS, TERMINATOR

SOPHIE ALDRED
DOCTOR WHO

SYLVESTER McCOY
DOCTOR WHO



DEBORAH WATLING
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Blastermind
The SFX quiz

VERSUS

In honour of *Batman V Superman*, 20 questions with a Vs theme...

Quizmaster: ***Richard Edwards, Editor***

QUESTION 1

Which two star superheroes from DC and Marvel, respectively, met in a 1976 comics crossover?

QUESTION 2

Which member of Destiny's Child was one of the stars of 2003's *Freddy Vs Jason*?

QUESTION 3

What's the name of Scott's band in *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World*?

QUESTION 4

Which of these has Mega Shark *not* faced in a movie? Crocosaurus, Mecha Shark, Muta-Ray?

QUESTION 5

What supernatural entities did *Cockneys* face off against in the title of a 2012 Brit horror?

QUESTION 6 PICTURE QUESTION

Which 2015 film was originally titled *Scouts Vs Zombies*?



QUESTION 6

QUESTION 7

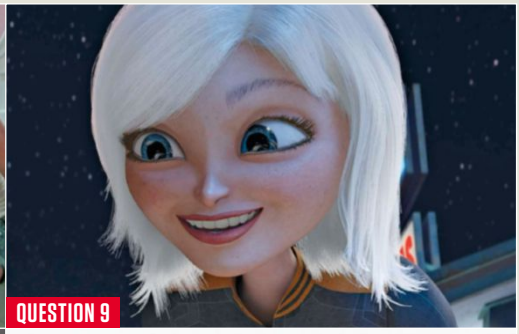
Not technically a Vs, which 2011 genre mishmash brought together a James Bond and Indiana Jones?

QUESTION 8

Which long-running supernatural franchise could have been titled *Vampires Vs Werewolves*?

QUESTION 9 PICTURE QUESTION

Which Oscar-winner voiced Ginormica in 2009 animated movie *Monsters Vs Aliens*?



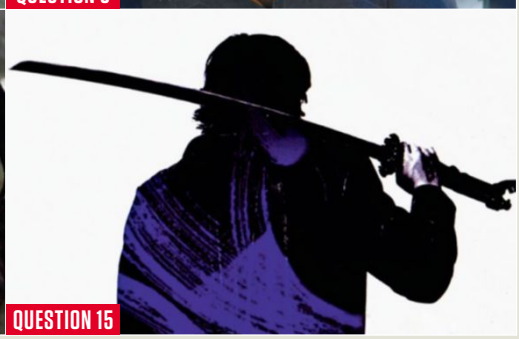
QUESTION 9

QUESTION 10

Which horror legend's final movie appearance came in 1971's *Dracula Vs Frankenstein*?



QUESTION 13



QUESTION 15

QUESTION 11

Bruce Campbell is back facing Deadites in *Ash Vs Evil Dead*. What's his character's full name?

QUESTION 12

At Comic-Con 2013, *Man Of Steel* star Harry Lennix read an extract from which classic Frank Miller comic book to introduce *Batman V Superman*?

QUESTION 13 PICTURE QUESTION

Who took the helm of the woeful *Aliens Vs Predator* sequel, *Requiem*?

QUESTION 14

Who provided the stop-motion effects for 1956 B-movie *Earth Vs The Flying Saucers*?

QUESTION 15 PICTURE QUESTION

Which 2000 Japanese film with a very-relevant-to-this-quiz title was promoted with this poster?



QUESTION 16

Which iconic cyborgs got the Vs treatment in the early '90s, both in a videogame and a Frank Miller-penned Dark Horse comic?

QUESTION 17

Which 2010 documentary about *Star Wars* fandom sported a rather confrontational title?

QUESTION 18

Which 21st century spy-fi TV show featured the word "Versus" in the title of every single episode?

QUESTION 19

IDW Comics has an ongoing series in which the Transformers take on characters from which fellow Hasbro franchise?

QUESTION 20

Who was the first monster to share title billing with Godzilla in the Toho series? Hint: he's also headlined his own movies.

Answers

1 Superman and Spider-Man 2 Kelly Rowland 3 Sex Bob-Omb 4 Muta-Ray 5 *Zombies 6 Scouts Guide To The Zombie Apocalypse* 7 *Cowboys & Aliens* 8 *Underworld* 9 Reese Witherspoon 10 Lon Chaney Jr 11 Ash Williams 12 *The Dark Knight Returns* 13 The Brothers Strause (Colin and Greg) 14 Ray Harryhausen 15 *Versus* 16 RoboCop and the Terminator 17 *The People Vs George Lucas* 18 *Chuck* 19 *GI Joe* 20 King Kong (in *King Kong Vs Godzilla*, 1962)

How did you do?

Which non-sci-fi Vs movie are you?



→ **0-5** **Ballistic: Ecks Vs Sever**



→ **6-10** **Joe Vs The Volcano**



→ **11-15** **The People Vs Larry Flynt**



→ **16-19** **Eagle Vs Shark**



→ **20** **Kramer Vs Kramer**

Total Recall

Personal recollections of cherished sci-fi



PHOTO BY OLLY CURTIS

THE WICKER MAN SOUNDTRACK

Will Salmon, News Editor

It's all about "Willow's Song" for me. The musical centrepiece of *The Wicker Man*'s soundtrack has been covered many times and remains emblematic of the film's weird appeal. It's a seductive and spooky slice of acid folk written by Paul Giovanni and beautifully sung by Rachel Verney.

Finding a copy of the soundtrack, however – at least in its filmic form – is harder than you might think. That's because there are *two* versions available. The one you can pick up today in your local HMV was released by Silva Screen in 2002, and is great. The sound quality is pristine, it features the lovely "Gentle Johnny" – a highlight of the film's extended edition – and the cover is beautiful.

And yet... something about it feels wrong. It's too clean, too polished – something *The Wicker Man*, with its faded film stock and wintry colour palette, never was. Crucially, the "Willow's Song" here is *not* the same as the movie's – it's performed by Leslie Mackie, who played Daisy.



The Verney version is only available on the edition put out by Trunk Records in 1998, now long out of print on CD and god's own format, vinyl. Back then, nobody had attempted to release the soundtrack before and, with no master tapes available, the tracks here were taken from a mono music and effects tape, with some songs (like "Gently Johnny") absent or incomplete.

Vinyl copies are tricky to find and expensive, tending to hover around the £50 mark these days – especially the red vinyl version. It's a strange artefact: occasionally feeling more like an abridged audio version of the film than a collection of music, but the atmosphere is unique. It puts you back on Summerisle in a way that the sparkly stereo version doesn't. And "Willow's Song" is the Rachel Verney version – the proper version! – in all its murky, mysterious glory.

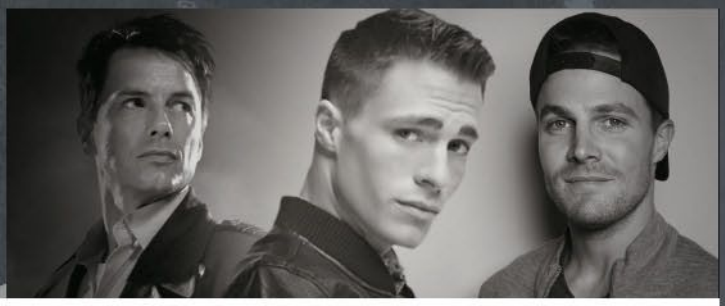
Will is finishing off his spooky poodle mask as we speak.

Fact Attack!

- **Just 1,000 copies of the Trunk Records release were pressed up: 500 on black vinyl, 500 on red, with an A4 map and postcards included.**
- **The music was performed by Magnet – a band formed by Paul Giovanni specifically for the purposes of *The Wicker Man* soundtrack.**
- **"Summer Is A Coming In" – sung by the islanders as the wicker man burns – is an adaptation of "Sumer Is Icumen In", from the 13th century.**
- **A few of the bands that have covered "Willow's Song": Sneaker Pimps, Seafood, Isobel Campbell, The Mock Turtles and The Go! Team.**

SEE YOU NEXT MONTH! 27 APRIL DETAILS ON PAGE 49

MEET YOUR FAVOURITE STARS AT ROGUE EVENTS CONVENTIONS



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Heroes from Comic Book adaptations in TV Shows

13th – 15th May 2016

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Stephen Amell & John Barrowman, Colton Haynes, Danielle Panabaker, David Ramsey, Katie Cassidy, Peyton List, Amy Gumenick, Tom Cavanagh, Carlos Valdes, Keiynan Lonsdale ... and more tba.



INSURGENCE 8

The Vampire Diaries & The Originals

10th – 12th June 2016

Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel

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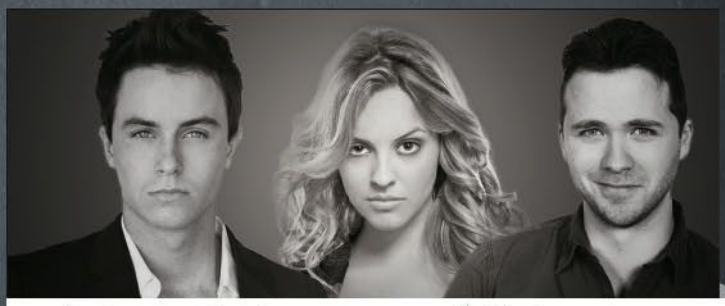
Prophecy

Buffy the Vampire Slayer & Angel the Series

17th – 19th June 2016

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WOLFS BANE 4

Teen Wolf

16th – 18th September 2016

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Gage Golightly, Ryan Kelly, Stephen Lunsford ... and more tba.

All actors appear subject to work commitment.

Find us online at

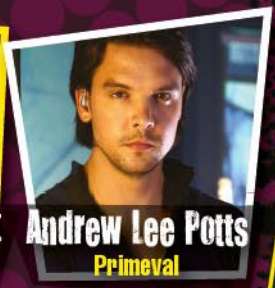
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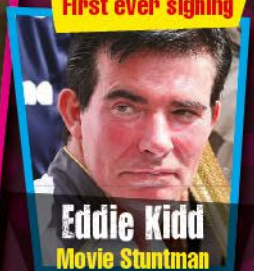
Swindon Film and Comic Con 2016

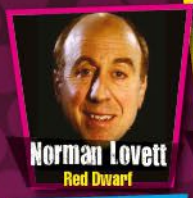

Hannah Spearritt
Primeval


Andrew Lee Potts
Primeval


Ian McNeice
Doctor Who

First ever signing


Eddie Kidd
Movie Stuntman


Norman Lovett
Red Dwarf


Kai Owen
Torchwood


Jack Klaff
Star Wars


John Altman
Eastenders


Lee McDonald & Erkan Mustafa
Grange Hill


John Challis & Sue Holderness
Only Fools & Horses


Chris Muncke
Star Wars


Nick Joseph
Star Wars


Salo Gardner
Star Wars


Miltos Yerolemou
Game of Thrones


Martine Beswick
James Bond


Caroline Munroe
Jame Bond

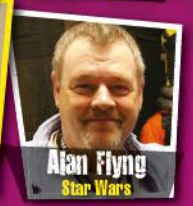
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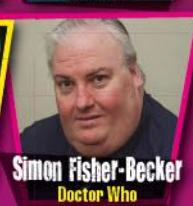

Mike Edmonds
Star Wars


Pam Rose
Star Wars


Alan Flyng
Star Wars

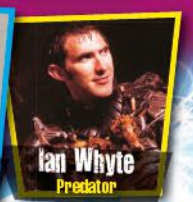

Pixue Le Knot
Game of Thrones


Steven Wickham
Doctor Who


Simon Fisher-Becker
Doctor Who

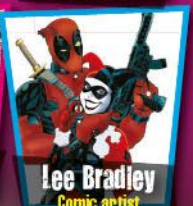

Arti Shah
The Force Awakens


Clem So
The Force Awakens


Ian Whyte
Predator


Anna Karen
On The Buses


Lee Townsend
Marvel & DC artist


Lee Bradley
Comic artist

Guests/Cars are subject to work commitments
Not all are appearing on both days. Guests are charging for autographs.

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